

Forming Person:
Narrative and Psychology in the Victorian Novel

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that the Victorian novel created a sensory self much like that articulated by Victorian physiological psychology: a multi-centered and process-oriented body that reacts to situations and stimuli as they arise by mobilizing appropriate cognitive and nervous functions. By reading Victorian fiction alongside psychology as it was developing into a distinct scientific discipline (during the 1840s–70s), this project addresses broader interdisciplinary questions about how the interaction between literature and science in the nineteenth century provided new ways of understanding human consciousness. I show that narrative engagements with psychology in the novel form made it possible for readers to understand the modern person as productively rather than pathologically heterogeneous. To accomplish this, fiction offered author and reader an experimental form for engaging ideas posed and debated concurrently in science.

The novels I read – by authors including Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and George Eliot – emerge as narrative testing grounds for constructions of subjectivity and personhood unavailable to scientific discourse. I attribute the novel's ability to create a sensory self to its formal tactics, from composites of multiple first-person accounts to strange juxtapositions of omniscience and subjectivity, from gaps and shifts in narrative to the extended form-in-process of the serial novel. My side-by-side readings of scientific and literary experiments make it clear that fiction is where we find the most innovative methods of investigation into embodied forms of human experience.

For Rosie

And for my Dad

For encouraging me to begin

Contents

Abstract	iv
List of Figures.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
INTRODUCTION Form, Person, and Experiment	1
The Form of the Person	5
Strategy and Tactics	16
Overview of the Dissertation.....	23
Literary Experiments	27
CHAPTER ONE The First Person in <i>Jane Eyre</i> and <i>Villette</i>	33
I. Mind and Body: Brontë and Nineteenth-Century Personal Identity	40
II. Jane Eyre's Narrative Strategies	54
III. Lucy Snowe's Tactics	66
IV. The Dancer and the Archivist	86
CHAPTER TWO <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> and Network Form.....	101
I. Serial Form	103
II. Seriality, Character, and Life in Aggregate	122
III. Victorian Networks: Dickens and Science.....	128
IV. The Novel as Network	134
V. Network and Affect	145
VI. Hallucinatory Dickens.....	157
CHAPTER THREE Sensation and Detection	162
I. Sensation and Detection in Combination.....	168

II. Sensation Debates and the Science of Psychology	178
i. Scientific Detection and Objectivity	181
ii. Sensation and the Sensory Consciousness.....	191
III. Detective Narrative, Sensational Narrative.....	201
IV. Detective Fever and <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>	217
V. Detection and Excess	222
CHAPTER FOUR <i>Daniel Deronda's Experiments in Life</i>	228
I. Eliot, Psychology, and the Novel	234
II. Narrative Knowledge	240
III. Consciousness of Self.....	247
IV. Gwendolen's "Subjection to a Possible Self"	259
V. Daniel "Transforming Influence" and Gwendolen's "New Consciousness"	266
VI. What Becomes of the "Bird's-Eye" Perspective.....	274
VII. "A Set of Experiments in Life"	280
Bibliography	285
Biography.....	304

List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>[O.S. Fowler], A phrenological chart of the head divided into over thirty images, mostly of individual people performing the faculties. (London: Straker, c. 1845); Wellcome Collection, 27921i</i>	49
Figure 2: <i>Image from Dickens's working notes for the fifth installment of Our Mutual Friend.</i>	108
Figure 3: <i>Image from Dickens's working notes for the seventh installment of Our Mutual Friend.</i>	112
Figure 4: <i>Pages 10 and 3 of Dickens's Book of Memoranda</i>	116
Figure 5: <i>Galton, Prevalent Types of Features Among Men Convicted of Larceny, 1880</i>	222
Figure 6: <i>Galton, Criminal Composite (New York Public Library/Science Photo Library http://sciencephoto.com)</i>	223

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INTRODUCTION

Form, Person, and Experiment

“I have a great difficulty beginning to write my portion of these pages,” writes Esther Summerson as she begins her narrative in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*.¹ In a novel famously divided in two – the third-person narrator’s bird’s eye view of the city interspersed with Esther’s first-person “portions” – Dickens uses Esther’s narrative to draw attention to both the difficulty and the necessity of detaching oneself from sensory immersion in the world in order to tell one’s own story. Esther’s difficulty might well stem from her awareness of her omniscient counterpart. The novel’s third-person narrator shares a detached perspective with its detective, Inspector Bucket – both have a panoptic view over London. Mr. Bucket, one of the earliest detectives in the British novel, “mounts a high tower in his mind, and looks out, far and wide. Many solitary figures he perceives, creeping through the streets, many solitary figures out on heaths, and roads, and lying under haystacks.”² In this respect, the detective and the narrator perform similar functions. Their cognitive capacities – their ability both to know and to tell – are achieved by means of self-abstraction from a temporally and spatially bound body: “Time and place cannot bind Mr Buckett,” we are told. “Like man in the abstract, he is here today and gone tomorrow – but, very unlike man indeed, he is here again the next day.”³ Even more successfully than Mr. Bucket, the novel’s omniscient narrator

¹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Penguin, 2003), 27.

² *Ibid.*, 864.

³ *Ibid.* 803.

employs methods of detached knowing to identify the “connexion... between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom.”⁴

It is therefore hardly surprising that Esther enters this novel hoping that her “little body” will “soon fade into the background” so she can tell a story with the same objectivity as her narrative counterpart. But Dickens has other plans for her. He uses Esther’s narration to overturn the association between narrative and detachment. Esther’s “little body,” far from fading from view, temporarily takes over the narrative:

I don’t know how it is I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible, and I am sure, when I find myself coming into the story again, I am really vexed and say, “Dear, dear, you tiresome little creature, I wish you wouldn’t!” but it is all of no use. I hope any one who may read what I write will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I can only suppose it must be because I have really something to do with them and can’t be kept out.⁵

If we put aside, for a moment, Esther’s disingenuous modesty and take her words seriously, we find in this passage a complicated relationship between body and mind that inflects the formal connections between intention and action, on the one hand, and between narrative subject and narrated object, on the other. Esther’s “little body” not only insists upon becoming the object of Esther’s narrative; this “tiresome little creature” also takes over the act of narrating. In this way, Dickens demonstrates that a willful body can take over the narrative supposed to proceed from a willful mind. In this passage, he gives her full control of the narrative, only to have her complain that this is not always the case. At such moments she is in effect split in two. A “tiresome little

⁴ Ibid, 256.

⁵ Ibid., 137.

creature” enters and influences the story in ways that Esther, as authorial agent, would presumably not allow.

This dissertation explores precisely those moments Esther complains about – instances when Victorian novels give narrative capacities traditionally associated with mental control over to the sensory processes and fleeting phenomenological experiences of a body immersed in a changing milieu. Novels do this in multiple ways – with gaps or shifts in narrative, with combinations of multiple partial characters, with juxtapositions of omniscience and free indirect discourse, or with the explicit storytelling of bodies and their sensory experiences. And when they do this, novels experiment with theories of consciousness and sensation that were being developed concurrently by Victorian psychology. Both the novel and psychological theory proposed two opposing ways of understanding the person: as a mind-centered autonomous individual in control of him or herself, and as a heterogeneous bundle of biological (nervous and sensory) processes responding to an environment. *Bleak House*, with its two narrators, formally enacts much the same opposition as the new physiological psychology of the period. Published in monthly installments from 1852 to 1853, this novel is poised on the cusp of a period of transition – from the 1840s to the late 1870s – during which British fiction developed new formal methods that changed the prevailing concept of a person.

It is, of course, always possible to read a novel like Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) as narrative whose diversions and non-linear form disrupt the biographical formation of an individual.⁶ But mainstream and popular

⁶ When *Tristram Shandy* is associated with later fiction, it is most often with early twentieth-century modernist writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce or with late-twentieth century writers like Thomas Pynchon and David Foster Wallace. Take, for instance, Italo Calvino’s oft-quoted reference (from the blurb to an Italian translation of Sterne’s *A Political Romance*) to

Victorian novels relinquished Sterne's satirical and metafictional manipulations of narrative form when they experimented with what had become, during the span of a century, the reigning normative model of a self-contained and self-governing self. What sets apart the period in the history of the novel on which I focus is the novel's serious engagement with physiological, psychological, and evolutionary theories of human life. This engagement took the form of conceptual experiments that took part in a cross-disciplinary conversation about the nature of a human person. I argue that during this period Victorian novels reshaped character to create a sensory self much like that articulated by Victorian physiological psychologists: a multi-centered and process-oriented body that reacts to situations and stimuli as they arise by mobilizing appropriate cognitive and nervous functions. These novels considered the loss of autonomy, self-control, and internal unity that characterizes a biologically embedded person in positive terms, as the means of multiplying and intensifying one's responses to a world that was expanding and increasing in heterogeneity. The Victorian novel used storytelling to shape a concept of a person that anticipates the one we now tend to attribute to a very different methodology: cognitive science and its notion of a "neurological self."⁷

Tristram Shandy as the "undoubted progenitor of all avant-garde novels of our century." Quoted in Steven Moore, *Novel: An Alternative History, 1600-1800* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 815.

⁷ Todd Feinberg: "I believe we now have sufficient knowledge of the workings of the brain to discern in broad outline how the neurological self is constructed from the 'wetware' of the nervous system." Todd Feinberg, *From Axons to Identity: Neurological Explorations of the Nature of the Self* (New York: Norton, 2009), xii. I draw this comparison between Victorian and contemporary approaches to the self cautiously. As this dissertation will argue, the Victorian notion of a sensory self was produced alongside and in tension with the notion of an autonomous individual and was in many ways more nuanced than much recent work in cognitive science.

The Form of the Person

The development of a sensory and adaptive idea of personhood was far from clear-cut for the Victorians, especially for Victorian science. Esther's "tiresome little creature" is a potential nuisance to her notion – and the novel's delineation – of mental autonomy in narrative. And this is perhaps hardly surprising given the importance to Victorian intellectual, political, and social life of a liberal individualism predicated on the belief, to use John Stuart Mill's phrase, that "[o]ver himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."⁸ It is therefore with an intriguing level of discomfort that the Victorians developed theories of a sensory version of the self that reacts to its environment by means of biological and nervous impulses. Fueled by evolutionary theory and materialist psychology, what might be called "the biological turn" redefined the human person as a biological organism. Psychology developed into a scientific discipline during the nineteenth century as the philosophy of mind took up the task of defining the mental make-up of this biological person.⁹ This move allowed the field of psychology to break away from Lockean associationism – the idea that human experience consists of series and combinations of sensations that produce ideas in the mind – and to formulate theories of mind that took physiology as the basis for an

⁸ John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty." *Mill: The Spirit of the Age, On Liberty, The Subjection of Women* (New York: Norton, 1997); 48.

⁹ The philosophy of mind of course has a long history that has frequently considered the relationship between mind and body. For histories of early psychology, see Christopher Green, *Early Psychological Thought: Ancient Accounts of Mind and Soul* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Simon Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* (New York: Greenwood, 1990); J-C Smith, ed., *Historical Foundations of Cognitive Science* (Boston: Kluwer, 1990). The formative influence of "mental philosophy" was felt in the early nineteenth century, as proponents such as William Hamilton pushed away from older metaphysical approaches and towards a psychology of mind. For more on the development of psychology as a field, see Kurt Danziger, *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found its Language* (London: SAGE, 1997) and Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

accurate account of human cognition.¹⁰ Although Victorian psychology can be characterized as a largely disparate and heterogeneous set of practices, by the 1870s it had begun to consolidate as a discipline with its own scholarly journal, *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy* (founded in 1876). One of the key findings of this new Victorian psychology was the observation that a nervous system can act and “think” without direction from the controlling power of mental will.

Psychologists and physiologists, including George Combe, William Carpenter, Alexander Bain, George Henry Lewes, Herbert Spencer, Henry Maudsley, and James Sully, found various ways to combine the legacy of Lockean associationism with the study of human physiology. They began to explore how human bodies could think, act, and know through a complex interaction of sensory and nervous processes. This new physiological psychology conjoined mind, brain, and body as components of a single dynamic operation. William Carpenter and Alexander Bain accepted the relationship between sensation and ideation provided by empiricist philosophy and contended that sensation – the property of a body – was the basis of all mental phenomena. Along with George Henry Lewes, they began to craft a new psychology that shifted the emphasis of

¹⁰ In his overview of Victorian psychology in *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel*, Nicholas Dames charts the impact in the early years of Victoria’s reign of Lockean associationism, voiced by the likes of James Mill, Dugald Stewart, and John Abercrombie, and the “faculty” psychology (e.g. Thomas Reid) that emphasized innate faculties of mind. He charts two Victorian challenges to these orthodoxies – one from the “pseudoscience” of phrenology (epitomized by George Combe) and one from physiology (epitomized by Alexander Bain). Whereas both associationism and faculty psychology developed out of eighteenth-century philosophy, phrenology and physiology were rooted in newer methods that emphasized the close relationship (for some a parallel relationship, for others causal) between materialism and cognition, between body and mind. As both Dames and Rick Rylance emphasize, Victorian psychology was by no means a unified field of study or a single discipline. Although it was becoming institutionalized by the 1870s (e.g. the formation of the journal *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy* in 1876), its scholars were combining perspectives from metaphysics and from evolutionary science and anatomy. Nicholas Dames, “‘The withering of the individual’: Psychology in the Victorian Novel,” in *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel*, e.d. Francis O’Gorman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005): 91-112.

the entire field onto physiological experimentation. Crucial to Victorian physiological psychology was its development of a theory of consciousness that redefined forms of cognitive agency – purpose, forethought, desire, or volition – as attributes of a sensory human body. Bain would argue that the will emerges from the organism rather than just from the mind. Although Carpenter attempted to hold on to the separate principle of mental agency he termed “Volition” or “Will,” he was remembered for his theory of unconscious cerebration, a concept that undergirded many later theories of sensory agency. In this respect, mid-nineteenth-century physiological psychology arguably anticipates the embodied consciousness now depicted in vivid colors with the use of fMRI, albeit with the added nuance, in these Victorian texts, of a cautious concern for the limits of physiology’s explanatory scope.¹¹

But these discoveries also posed a problem for the very science that was producing them. How could a science create stable, accurate knowledge about the

¹¹ Victorian psychology is notable, for instance, for its hesitancy about its complete account of the truth. Henry Maudsley hopefully predicted that physiology would lead to an ultimate truth about behavior, but he admitted that “it is not probable that this most desirable and inevitable result will come to pass in this day or generation; for it is not unknown how far distant yet is the day of full and exact physiological knowledge, nor how slowly, when it approaches, we may expect the light to penetrate the thick fogs of ignorance.” *The Physiology of Mind* (New York: Appleton, 1877), 24. While we might read such statement as the prediction of twenty-first century “full and exact... knowledge,” nineteenth-century psychologists appeared to be aware that any science of mind must be based upon the limits of human knowledge.

In many instantiations, contemporary cognitive neuroscience is less hesitant than Victorian physiological psychology in making claims to truth. A 2008 article in the *International Journal of Psychophysiology* by John Darrel Van Horn and Russell A. Poldrack refers to the first decade of the twenty-first century as “the Decade of the Brain.” In 2007 alone, they claim, there were over 2000 research articles published about fMRI technology’s “applications to understanding mental operations and their disorders.” But, they point out, the possibilities such insights into the brain have been “sensationalized” by in popular culture: “Stories of brain researchers using fMRI to peer deeply into human mental processes both frightens and fascinates non-scientists – at once, evoking visions of reading one’s thoughts while also providing an intriguing rationale for human character.” “Functional MRI at the Crossroads,” *International Journal of Psychophysiology* 73 no.1 (2009): 3-9.

nature of a human person when what it was finding was that a person is formed by a bundle of fleeting sensory and biological processes? Scientific method overcame this problem by means of an explanatory apparatus capable of classifying and predicting biological personhood – the notion that a person is first and foremost a natural organism and therefore both determined by and interpretable according to biological principles. Although nineteenth-century discussions of science were characterized by a recognition that scientific methodology must be closely intertwined with more intuitive forms of knowledge, in order to carve out a science of the mind psychology had to develop a method of distance and detachment from the particularities of individual experience. As George Henry Lewes wrote:

Psychology is a science of the human mind, not of any individual mind. No science can be founded on single specimens: it formulates general laws, not cases. The individual observer has his idiosyncrasies, peculiarities belonging to his organism and education; these have to be eliminated or reduced to law."¹²

In other words, to be a science, psychology had to pin down *the* person. This meant it had to cope with the array of variations between individual people by turning them into something conceivable and subject to “general laws” – turning many people into *the* person. But it also meant that, in the wake of overpopulation and a biologized conception of the human, psychology had to contend with the looming presence of mass humanity, which threatened to dissolve the notion of a single self into a multiplicity. Lewes’s brand of physiological psychology sought to establish “a science of the human mind” by identifying a set of generalizable mental properties by which it could maintain the boundaries of “the person” as an individuated category of being.

¹² George Henry Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind: Problem the First, The Study of Psychology, its Object, Scope, and Method* (London: Trubner, 1879), 96.

Psychological science would eventually embrace objectivity as its epistemological stance and generalization as its rhetoric in order to make deviation and variation useless for the purposes of identification.¹³ For instance, at the end of the century Francis Galton created a series of composite photographs that superimposed multiple images upon one another in an effort to eliminate individual variations and produce a single, stable image of a type – the criminal type, the Jewish type, on so on.¹⁴ Similarly, in his fingerprint directories, Galton tried to eradicate the variations of a single person and produce a visual trace that could “fix the human personality, to give to each human being an identity, an individuality that can be depended upon with certainty, lasting, unchangeable, always recognisable and easily adduced.”¹⁵ This extreme late-century example demonstrates how forensic psychological science sought to turn the person into a stable entity in reaction to the century-long conflict between taxonomic fixity and the newly discovered fluidity and heterogeneity of personhood. From the 1840s to the 1870s, both the novel and psychology were intent upon exposing the creative capacities of a biological person, which seemed to make them all the more concerned with containing these capacities in the name of maintaining some sort of representational mastery over personhood. The Victorian novel turned this seeming contradiction into an opportunity to produce new ways of attaching novel form to the form of a person.

¹³ For a history of the Victorian emphasis on objectivity and detachment in science, see George Levine, *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone, 2010).

¹⁴ See chapter 3, page 222.

¹⁵ Francis Galton, *Finger Prints* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 169. Galton.org.

There is a wealth of critical precedent for reading the nineteenth-century novel as a form bound to the concept of the self-contained individual. We might think, for instance, of Georg Lukács's claim that the novel tasked itself with providing the totality it found missing from the modern world, a totality it identifies with the biographical teleology of a protagonist's life. Scholarship in Victorian studies has tended to approach the "person" in the novel either as a product of discourse (the liberal individual, the self-governing citizen) or as a product of the excessive desires that cannot be expressed within the limits of bourgeois normativity (the psychoanalytic subject) – that is, either from the outside as a product of socio-cultural normalization or from the inside as an individual whose complexities are rooted in a single unconsciousness, a single neurosis. If we habitually associate the form of the novel with the relatively stable, mind-centered consciousness of an individual person, it is because our typical critical approach to the novel is one that associates narrative with authority and control. Work by Amanda Anderson and David Wayne Thomas has been especially influential in reviving the liberal ideal that invites us to read the nineteenth-century novel as cultivating forms of detachment and self-governance that promote the idea of mind-centered agency.¹⁶ My work offers a different account of Victorian narrative. I show the novel diverging from an earlier focus on a self located in an autonomous individuated mind and turning towards embodied ways of being in and interacting with the world. Rather than tracing a genealogy backward from twentieth-century work in psychoanalytic or evolutionary psychology to explain the discontinuous and heterogeneous self of Victorian fiction, I

¹⁶ Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); David Wayne Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

look at this concept of the person as one produced in collaboration with nineteenth-century material psychology.

Considering how many Victorian novels take their titles from individuals' names (*Adam Bede*, *Daniel Deronda*, *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre*, *Little Dorrit*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Miss Marjoribanks*, *Robert Elsmere*, *Silas Marner*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, to name just a few), one can hardly dispute the claim that the Victorian novel takes the individual as its primary point of focus. This does not mean, however, that the self in question in the fiction of the mid-Victorian period is the same mind-centered individual celebrated in Jane Austen's novels. On the contrary, that self has come into question. Taking the association Nancy Armstrong draws between the novel and the individual as a starting point, I show that the model of a modern subject – a self-enclosed, self-governing, mind-centered individual – was only one version of the person produced by the nineteenth century—and by no means the most influential in formal terms.¹⁷ By the end of the century, popular romance revival novels such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), would make explicit the notion of a person as a multiplicity of parts. When they made the disaggregation of self explicitly formal, these novels intensified a heterogeneity and fluidity to personhood that had already been

¹⁷ This project is inspired by Nancy Armstrong's claim that "the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same." Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 3. Armstrong is interested not only in how novels produced modern subjects by incorporating and subsuming gothic, sensational, anti-individualistic elements, but also how the novel – particularly towards the end of the nineteenth-century in the popular romance – began to confront the *limits* of individualism posed by "the figure of mass man" – the biological and the collective notion of the human that had to be excluded in order for the individual to maintain self-containment (23). She charts a shift in the post-Darwinian novel *vis a vis* the individual; my project seeks to identify just how a new formation of the person accounts for such a shift.

developed by earlier, mainstream Victorian fiction. Take, for instance, the mutability of consciousness and fluidity of the boundaries between selves in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, in which Catherine says of Heathcliff, "he's more myself than I am."¹⁸ Or think of the doubling of Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. Rosanna Spearman in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* offers an example of a character whose identity appears to be inseparable from the "shivering sands" in which she ends her life; such characters are embedded within the environment and constitute what Lyndall in Olive Schreiner's 1883 novel *The Story of an African Farm* calls "little plastic beings" who are "shape[d]" by the world they enter.¹⁹ Sensation novels abound with heterogeneous, split selves: Lydia Gwilt in Wilkie Collins's *Armada*; Isabel Carlyle in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*; Lady Audley / Lucy Graham in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*. In experimental collaboration with the psychology of its day, the Victorian novel produced a version of the person that was fluid and embedded in an environment, heterogeneous and responsive to its milieu, sometimes a partial self and sometimes several selves in one, but always in the process of formation. Once introduced into the novel, I argue, this alternative model of personhood swiftly became the dominant model.

To see how the novel produced this fluid and heterogeneous concept of a person is to understand how the form of the novel itself changed during the Victorian period, developing a periodically disrupted yet more fluid and heterogeneous form of its own. By reading novels of the Victorian era, whether biographically titled or not, as if they were tasked with producing a continuous biographical subject, criticism tends either to

¹⁸ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 1992), 86.

¹⁹ Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 154.

downplay the very changes that mark those novels as Victorian or to misunderstand how these formal changes contributed to the historically changing concept of the person. My hope is to correct the habit of reading as anomalies, if not as mistakes, all those moments when a novel introduces gaps or abrupt changes into narration or into the story being told. This means altering our tendency to read the form of the novel as only an architectural structure, a whole, synchronic system.

I offer a different way of reading the Victorian novel form. In chapters that consider works by Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and George Eliot, among others, I focus on what readers tend to regard as intrusive evidence of formlessness and reconsider that material in terms of the very formal aspects of the novel responsible for reconceptualizing “the person” in terms of a biological turn. This redefinition is accomplished by means of narrative experiments in tactics (chapter 1), network form (chapter 2), sensation (chapter 3), and phenomenological narration (chapter 4), all aimed at undermining the procedures by which these novels, in order to be novels, strive to imagine individuals who are stable, self-contained, and mind-centered. In staging this conflict, the novels I consider all emphasize a model of the person capable of encapsulating change and connected by a nervous system to a world in which material bodies circulate along with things and information. This person is, I argue, consistent with a biological concept of life as *living* and compatible with evolutionary change. Where Victorian science struggled to attain the critical distance required to produce an authoritative definition of the human person as a biological being, the Victorian novel devised ways of enacting the life – in living – of such a person.

This means understanding “form” as a verb rather than as a noun, and the novel, then, as a formation – a forming of person. Such an approach to the Victorian novel is

reinforced by what Nicholas Dames has shown to be a Victorian theory of the novel that embraced “a processual, affective, reader-centered methodology whose notion of ‘form’ was thoroughly temporal.”²⁰ Dames explains that the Victorians considered form “as a rhythm or time signature, rather than a synchronic structure.” What he calls the “physiological novel theory” of the period understood form as something “produced by reading in time, particularly in the rhythms of attention and inattention, slow comprehension and rapid skipping ahead, buildups and discharges of affect.”²¹ Dames’s emphasis on the close relationship of affect and formal process undergirds my approach to form in this dissertation; it is for this reason I title my project “Forming Person.”

But while Dames maintains that the Victorians understood novel form “as a process rather than a structure,” I would argue that they understood it as *both* a process *and* a structure.²² For instance, after he finished writing a serial novel, Charles Dickens often attempted to reframe the processual form of serial fiction as a “whole pattern.”²³ In the prefaces and postscripts that he added to several of his novels after their serial runs, he asked his readers to turn what had been a form-in-process into a structure: “it is not unreasonable to ask that the weaving may be looked at in its completed state, and with the pattern finished.”²⁴ Dickens was evidently apprehensive that his serial form-in-process, which he once celebrated as making possible a “constant succession of characters and incidents,” contradicted the wholeness of novel form represented by “the

²⁰ Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 821.

²⁴ Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xxi.

greatest novelists in the English language," Richardson and Fielding.²⁵ My second chapter explains in detail how the serial form of Dickens's novels prevails despite their re-publication as whole texts. For purposes of this introduction, I will merely say that novel form could mean both structure and process to the Victorian reader (and writer). This uneasy but nevertheless concomitant juxtaposition of system as structure and system as process – i.e. of the novel's form (n) and form (v) – is virtually the same constitutive opposition by means of which the novel produces a person. The aim of this project is to show how the form-in-process of the novel produced a corresponding processual understanding of the person. The person produced by the form of the Victorian novel was not primarily a whole entity to be understood at a distance, but more importantly a living form, in formation.²⁶ I demonstrate in the chapters to follow that major Victorian novelists ask us to think this way whenever a narrative traditionally associated with mind-centered control capitulates to a mode of narration rooted in sensory bodies.

²⁵ Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xxxiv.

²⁶ This project, then, seeks an alternative method of reading to that advanced by Franco Moretti as "distant reading." The recent turn towards distance as a method of critical reading – a critical method advanced by the use of digital technology to enhance our reading of novels – is to some extent an extension of the method of reading that Dames identifies with Percy Lubbock's 1921 *The Craft of Fiction*, in which Lubbock (quoted here by Dames) describes the methodology of criticism as follows: "To grasp the shadowy and phantasmal form of a book, to hold it fast, to turn it over and survey it at leisure – that is the effort of a critic of books, and it is perpetually defeated... So far from losing ourselves in the world of the novel, we must hold it away from us, see it all in detachment, and use the whole of it to make the image we see, the book itself." Dames, *Physiology*, 33. As Dames comments, "the job of the critic [according to Lubbock] is *not to read*, but to extract data from the novel that make up mental wholes" (34). Moretti's basis for his theory of "distant reading" is different to Lubbock's; he criticizes close reading for its inability to look beyond the canon because close reading allows us to read only a few texts: "we know how to read texts, now let's learn how *not* to read them," he argues in his essay "Conjectures on World Literature." "Distant reading: where distance, let me repeat it, *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems." In effect, when he argues for the methodology of distant reading, Moretti admits that it is not, in fact, a form of reading at all. Sometimes, he admits, "the text itself disappears." Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature" *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 57.

Strategy and Tactics

By exposing the tensions between form and forming, between whole and part, between stasis and process, Victorian novels created an opposition between a form that would pin down and make stable the nature of a person and an alternative form designed to enact the process of a person (or many people) as it evolved in response to a world. My theoretical touchstone for this approach is the work of Michel de Certeau, whose model of strategy and tactics is central to my reading of Charlotte Brontë's fiction (chapter 1), but whose theoretical approach and friendly critique of Michel Foucault's notion of power undergirds my project as a whole. In his compelling contrast between looking down upon New York versus navigating its streets and neighborhoods, de Certeau clarifies the difference between the top-down properties of strategy and the immanent maneuvers of tactics. He writes of the view of Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. From up there, the city is a whole, a grid, a map, a stable structure. He calls this perspective strategic. It is totalizing and systematic. But, he points out, the day-to-day experience of life in the city is very different; it is immersive. The pedestrian makes his own paths through the city, cuts corners, makes impulsive decisions, in response to the living city. The urban planner looking down at Manhattan and the pedestrian walking through Manhattan are viewing the same city, but the pedestrian makes her own version of it. De Certeau calls this responsive and creative movement tactics.

De Certeau's strategy behaves much like the panoptical power Foucault attributes to nineteenth-century French and British liberalism: the totalizing production of order enacted from an elevated or privileged "observational distance," a "place that can be circumscribed as *proper*," and from which operations of mapping, planning,

systemization, and normalization are carried out.²⁷ To theorize strategic practices, de Certeau draws on Foucault's theorization of the mechanisms of disciplinary power. Foucault offers a model of subject-production whereby power, mobilized by expansive institutional apparatuses and functioning via the illusion of total panoptic observation, is in fact internalized, producing from within the consequently disciplined, docile body of the individual. Without denying this technology of discipline, de Certeau finds in Foucault's "microphysics of power" the potential for a more nuanced approach to a disciplinary society, whereby "'miniscule' technical procedures" – which Foucault sees as functions of disciplinary power – can alternatively be understood as "silent technologies" with the potential to "short-circuit institutional directions."²⁸ That is, de Certeau is interested in small, everyday operations that proceed independently of, or even in manipulation of, the disciplinary gaze.

Thus where Foucault gives coherence to disciplinary procedures, de Certeau asks, what happens to the displaced, non-discursive practices that Foucault refers to without detailing?²⁹ In response to *Discipline and Punish*, he writes: "If it is true that the grid of 'discipline' is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also 'miniscule' and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline

²⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 53, xix.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xiv.

²⁹ De Certeau argues that from *The Order of Things* onwards, "Foucault is led to make a *selection* from the ensemble of procedures that form the fabric of social activity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." He performs a "surgical operation" by starting with a "proliferating contemporary system... and tracing it back through history, isolating from the whole body the cancerous growth that has invaded it, and explaining its current functioning by its *genesis* over the two preceding centuries." Foucault, then, he argues, carries out a massive "operation" by which he "extracts" and privileges "the optical and panoptical procedures," which he considers dominant. Foucault's archeological approach to history, in de Certeau's eyes, leaves untouched many other practices which "remain 'minor.'" De Certeau, *Practice*, 47-48.

and conform to them only in order to evade them.”³⁰ On the level of narrative, we might say that the strategic, disciplinary practices – which consist of carefully-controlled world-making carried out from a proper “place” by a “subject with will and power,” a person – are not the only, or even the primary, operations of narrative.³¹ If the strategic narrative agency we can discern in Victorian novels provides the “grid of ‘discipline,’” then tactical agency offers “ways of operating” that can “reappropriate” spaces subject to strategic surveillance.³²

“Tactics” work within but often against the homogeneity, stability, and totality produced by strategic world-making. They are movements within strategy’s borderlines that manipulate its space. Much like the pedestrian, they wander in the streets that the urban planner, the strategist, can only see from above; they act without a definite plan; they operate by way of “isolated actions, blow by blow.”³³ Tactics “infiltrate” a system; they are diffuse and fleeting “ruses” that opportunistically subvert the framework implemented by strategy. Strategy and tactics are inseparable from one another. They are dual processes with regards to the same space. Although tactics operate within a territory provided by strategy, they are by no means secondary to strategy’s operations. While strategy has “power,” it is “bound” by its own “visibility”; a tactic, however, is an “art of the weak,” characterized by “trickery,” “deception,” and creativity.”³⁴ In this respect, it is aligned with art and with style. If strategy holds the cards over the traditional definition of “authority” as masterful power and control, when it comes to

³⁰ De Certeau, *Practice*, xiv.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

³² *Ibid.*, xiv.

³³ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

narrative, tactics have their own *author-ity*, their own creative and stylistic tricks and ways of operating.

De Certeau's model offers a theoretical framework for understanding how tactical aspects of a novel's form(ation) can work against and yet within the strategic framework of novel form and how the novel can produce two opposing notions of what it means to be a person that are nevertheless part of a single formulation. Valuing tactics means valuing the creative potential of a narrative's minor and deviant operations and understanding these operations as a type of form in their own right. The theoretical model I adopt from de Certeau is pertinent to a study of nineteenth-century fiction because its roots are not in 1980s French theory but in early nineteenth-century military language and in a wider cultural understanding of the relationship between plan and action in the Victorian period. Although the term "tactic" dates back to the early seventeenth-century, the OED cites the first use of the term "strategy" from 1802 in Charles James's *New and Enlarged Military Dictionary*: "Strategy differs materially from *tactic*; the latter belonging only to the mechanical movements of bodies, set in motion by the former."³⁵

It was in the nineteenth-century that strategy and tactics were put in conversation with one another. In his 1855 book *Considerations on Tactics and Strategy*, Colonel George Twemlow made this distinction: "The movements of an army, *before* arriving within view or possible contact of an opponent, are considered strategic; those executed in presence of, or near an enemy, appertain to tactics."³⁶ In other words,

³⁵ Charles James, "Strategy," *A New and Enlarged Military Dictionary*, vol.2, 3rd ed. 1802, (London: T. Egerton, 1810).

³⁶ Colonel George Twemlow, *Considerations on Tactics and Strategy*, 2nd ed. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1855), 87.

strategy is the plan of the whole; tactics are those actions that respond to a situation. Twemlow associated strategy with a science: “a battle merely tactical is unscientific, and a useless effusion of blood.”³⁷ General Dufour, in his *Strategy and Tactics* (1864), made the same association between strategy and a “science of generals.”³⁸ His language for the difference between strategy and tactic focused on the “grand movements” of strategy based on the “almost unchanging” “topography of the theatre of war” versus the “special arrangements, evolutions, or, in a word, Tactics” that “vary” depending on the situation; the tactical is that “resulting from the nature of the ground where the troops are to act.”³⁹ In a review of Dufour’s book, the *Atlantic Monthly* would praise his distinction between strategy and tactics as one “not always clearly understood” and would paraphrase his distinction in terms that reinforce the difference between the fixity of strategy and the mutability and responsiveness of tactics: “Strategy depends upon circumstances fixed in their nature, and is the same always and everywhere; but tactics must be modified to suit degree of skill, arms, and manner of fighting of the combatants.”⁴⁰ De Certeau’s adoption of these terms evidently draws on nineteenth-century theories in which strategy implies top-down authority, rendering the art of war a scientific theory, and generalizing and totalizing operations; tactics are those immanent movements of single actors who respond to the environment and the other actors in a single battle.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ General G. H. Dufour, *Strategy and Tactics*, trans. William P. Craighill (New York: Van Nostrand, 1864), 8.

³⁹ Ibid., 7; 194.

⁴⁰ “Reviews and Literary Notices: Strategy and Tactics,” *The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics* Vol. 14 (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864): 260.

Strategy and tactics, conceived by nineteenth-century military theoreticians and developed into a theory of practice in everyday life by de Certeau, offer me an alternative to the methodology that has been the impetus behind much scholarship in Victorian studies on the novel and psychology. The influence of a particular mode of reading Foucault's understanding of disciplinary power in much criticism of nineteenth-century literature has tended to highlight the procedures by which technologies of power produce and homogenize human subjects according to behavioral norms. I am wary of a tendency to read all aspects of the person in Victorian fiction according to a normal-abnormal binary. A significant portion of criticism of Victorian literature and psychology from the 1990s to the late 2000s has taken as its focus the role of nervousness, madness, disease, hysteria, or illness. Pioneers in this field, Sally Shuttleworth and Jenny Bourne-Taylor, frequently emphasize pathology, particularly in female characters.⁴¹ Other examples include Athena Vrettos's feminist critique of how narratives of illness became invested with cultural value; Helen Small's study of the complicated relationship between medical and fictional accounts of insanity; and Peter Logan's exploration of how the body is ideologically inscribed as pathological in early nineteenth-century literature.⁴² Without disputing the prevalence of madness and disease in Victorian fiction or the critical insights provided by studies of pathological manifestations of psychology in the novel, I am interested in an alternative approach to

⁴¹ Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

⁴² Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Peter Logan, *Nerves and Narratives: A Cultural History of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century British Prose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

the novel's exploration of nervousness, fragmented consciousness, and lack of cognitive control.

De Certeau's subtle but robust re-reading of Foucault and of the everyday practices by which single bodies evade the mechanisms of power offers an alternative apparatus for reading reason and mental control as strategies and the unpredictable performances of nervous bodies as creative tactics. Such an approach can offer a useful counterbalance to, for instance, feminist Foucauldian readings of sensational and nervous female bodies in the Victorian novel that see such hysterical symptoms as the products of male disciplinary control – an argument made persuasively by Ann Cvetkovich about the sensation novel.⁴³ The theoretical recuperation of minor and opportunistic practices offered by the logic of tactics – de Certeau's "art of the weak" – offers a positive re-formulation of pathology as the creative maneuvers of bodies in spite of their susceptibility to diagnosis and discipline and their subordination to cognitive control. This dissertation shows how the novel's narrative engagements with physiological and psychological aspects of subjectivity shaped a productively heterogeneous, rather than pathological, concept of a person. In particular, by rooting narrative in the perambulations and performances of nervous bodies rather than in the careful control of a detached mind, the novel was able to experiment with just what a sensory form of consciousness might look like.

My methodology is thus inspired by a renewed recognition in Victorian studies, particularly in the work of Dames and of Vanessa Ryan, that the novel played a vital role in shaping nineteenth-century ideas about the human mind. My work shares with

⁴³ Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

Ryan her insistence that Victorian novelists “went beyond the question of what the mind is to explore the dynamic experience of how the mind functions.”⁴⁴ I build upon Ryan’s emphasis on the centrality of dynamic adaptability in Victorian mind theory and her thorough articulation of how Victorian physiological psychologists, along with novelists, developed a much richer theory of unconsciousness than the reductive Freudian model we have become accustomed to reading back onto the Victorians. My project, however, is much more interested in the formal innovations that allowed the novel to experiment with just how a sensory (un)consciousness could function to revise our understanding of what constitutes a person. I am interested in the psychologies of novel form that test out how we might imagine a sensory person always in the process of adapting to an environment.

Overview of the Dissertation

While strategy and tactics provide a theoretical framework that situates my project and that is foundational to my reading of first-person narration in chapter 1, each of the proceeding chapters considers a different analytic pairing that offers a similar – though in disciplinary orientation, unique – way of understanding the project’s larger opposition between a narrative associated with mind-centered authority and a countering narrative form that emerges out of impulsive responses to a changing environment. The terms this opposition assumes in each chapter emerge out of the texts themselves, thus how they ask to be read. In doing so, they also indicate the means by which nineteenth-century culture sought to dismantle the knowledge one gains from an

⁴⁴ Vanessa Ryan, *Thinking Without Thinking in the Victorian Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 1.

external and detached perspective on the person from the knowledge garnered through a person's immediate sensory engagement with the world.

This dissertation begins with novels that establish the nature of a person by having a "first person" narrate his or her own story. My first chapter reads Charlotte Brontë's first-person fictional autobiographies, *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, in terms of the interaction of strategic and tactical accounts of an individual's experience, the first a detached view established from the narrator's position outside and after the life she narrates (most evident in *Jane Eyre*), and the second an immediate and at times fragmented perspective that remains embedded inside the progress of a narrative (most evident in *Villette*). In experimenting with these notions of the person formed and in formation, respectively, Brontë's first-person narration takes up debates that gave birth to the discipline of psychology. In these debates, the Romantic and "Common Sense" philosophical notions of a stable self formed in and by mind were challenged by early-century physiological theories of a multiple self that came from and was embedded in a biological body subject to an environment. In order to consider how narrative gives form to these competing notions of personhood, I challenge the familiar reading of Brontë's first-person novels as displays of self-definition and authority. This first chapter shows how first-person narration *produces* (rather than assumes the prior presence of) a "person" narrating.

From there I turn to what happens to narrative form when it is no longer shaped by the experience of a single protagonist. Focusing on the densely populated multi-plot novel *Our Mutual Friend*, I show how Dickens uses the interactive and contingent properties of serial publication to dismantle anything like a continuous linear narrative account of a person's experience and to create in its place a network form-in-process that

behaves like an open system. This chapter demonstrates how Dickens put into practice the same mechanisms to produce the social life of a city and the aesthetic form of the novel that Victorian science used to imagine biological life. But aided by the serial novel form, Dickens's city novel imagines positive alternatives to the biologically over-determined world described in physiological science by George Henry Lewes and in evolutionary theory by Charles Darwin. In writing into being a city full of people, Dickens used the mechanisms of a network – a concept used by both Lewes and Darwin to describe life as a system of interactions between mutable component parts – to form a novel around the attractions and reactions among characters in whom psychology is collective and social rather than around the psychological development of a single protagonist.

The sensation novel explicitly stages the dichotomy between the experience and knowledge of personhood in formal terms. My third chapter argues that the forms we term “sensation” and “detection” emerged together during the 1860s and 70s in both novels and physiology as competing narrative procedures. Criticism of these popular Victorian novels tends to center on either sensation or detection or to consider one as a constituent feature of the other. This chapter reads sensation and detection as opposing ways of knowing and narrating human behavior that, when combined, alter the form of the novel and the psychology of its characters. In these novels, objective methods of making bodies stable and legible by describing and predicting their generalizable behaviors from the outside (detection) react to and often give way to a very different way of knowing rooted in the particular experiences of single sensory bodies (sensation). Sensation novelists Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon took a body that could be managed in and through a detached mind and reimagined that body as a

bundle of unpredictable but physiologically willed processes that could tell their own stories. In sensation novels, in other words, Esther Summerson's "tiresome little creature" literally takes over the narrative. Both novelists and physiological psychologists – particularly Lewes and contributors to the first psychology journal *Mind* – explained human behavior by staging the showdown between the competing claims of detective knowledge and sensory experience. By making narration a property of sensory experience, such novels as *The Moonstone*, *The Woman in White*, and *Lady Audley's Secret* pointed out the flaws of detective epistemology and, in this way, challenged the scientific explanation of human behavior. This move on the part of the sensation novel changed what authors writing in the tradition of realism could say about human behavior.

By the mid 1870s, realist novelists who were explicitly interested in exploring the psychology of individual minds did so in the wake of the challenge that had been posed by the novel and physiological psychology to the very notion of an autonomous individual. My fourth and final chapter turns to George Eliot, who was embedded within the intellectual milieu of the most prominent Victorian psychologists and who regarded her novels as part of a discourse on the nature and the ethics of human thought and action. I argue that her final novel, *Daniel Deronda*, tests out the capacity of novel form to narrate a subjective psychology of individual characters whose status as individuals is always in question. As Eliot's most dramatic experiment with novel form, *Daniel Deronda* makes the parallel but antithetical developments of self-consciousness in its two protagonists into a formal mechanism for synthesizing scientific objectivity and novelistic phenomenology. Eliot uses third-person narrative "omniscience" to make the process of turning the person into an object of knowledge a constitutive feature of self-

consciousness. Her novels found a potential in realism to experiment with a subject shaped by the very experience of being defined as such by both science and literature. This final chapter reads Eliot's formal treatment of subjectivity as a fictional precursor to the psychological theory William James would develop at the end of the century. Both James and Eliot responded to Victorian physiological and associationist psychology by using interiority rather than scientific objectivity as the primary means of understanding a person, but they both assimilated the scientific method of the psychologist into the experience of subjectivity. Eliot's narrative form made it possible to reconcile the methodological opposition prevalent in sensation fiction and in physiological psychology between knowing the person and being a knowing person.

Literary Experiments

My approach to the Victorian novel is informed by my conviction that the novel form conducted experiments with physiological notions of human motivation and behavior. I use the term "experiment" in the sense of an interrogation or testing out, not in the sense of confirming existing hypotheses.⁴⁵ When George Eliot described her novels as "a set of experiments in life – an endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of," she described the novelistic experimentation as capable of producing a new understanding of human behavior.⁴⁶ Approaching the novel as a form

⁴⁵ For a similar critical use of "experiment" as a "mechanism for enabling *new* questions and concepts" see Rob Mitchell's introduction to *Experimental Life*, in which he locates such an approach to science and the experiment in a tradition of the history of science and literary and cultural criticism developed by Gaston Bachelard, George Canguilhem, Ludwik Fleck, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Richard Doyle, and Elizabeth Wilson. Robert Mitchell, *Experimental Life: Vitalism in Romantic Literature and Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 8-9.

⁴⁶ George Eliot, 1819-1880, Letter from George Eliot to Joseph Frank Payne, January 25, 1876, in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 6: 1874-1877 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), 440.

aimed at generating possibilities rather than facts is faithful to the nineteenth-century relationship between literature and science.

When George Levine writes in a self-reflexive essay about his interdisciplinary focus on “literature and the culture it embodied and transformed,” he uses terminology that has come to be standard fare in writing about nineteenth-century literature in relation to science.⁴⁷ Thus, Sally Shuttleworth explains how Charlotte Brontë “both assimilated and challenged Victorian constructs, interrogating received notions, exploring their contradictions, and breaking the bounds of contemporary discourse”; Jane Wood argues that “[m]edicine and literature looked to each other for elucidation and illustration”; and Katherine Hayles claims that literary texts “actively shape” the cultural meanings of scientific theories but also “embody assumptions similar to those that permeated scientific theories at critical points.”⁴⁸ Each of these scholars uses the language of assimilation, embodiment, and transformation to acknowledge a multi-directional influence between literature and science that has been central to this interdisciplinary trend of scholarship since the pioneering work of Gillian Beer and George Levine in the 1980s.⁴⁹ But this language of assimilation and embodiment lacks

⁴⁷ George Levine, “Science and Victorian Literature: A Personal Retrospective,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 12 no.1 (2007): 89.

⁴⁸ Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, 5; Jane Wood, *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.; Katherine N. Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 21.

⁴⁹ Gillian Beer’s 1983 *Darwin’s Plots* was one of the first works of scholarship to make grand strides in altering the critical picture of one-way influence from science to literature in the nineteenth-century. Concentrating on Charles Darwin, Beer emphasized the cultural equivalence and two-way flow of concepts and language between literature and science. She stressed the centrality of literary tropes to scientific work as well as the use literature made of Darwinian theories and models. Beer’s work paved the way for criticism that has since seen both literature and science as cultural productions as well as sites of cultural production. Beer’s work encouraged a generation of critics to explore the complex and often slippery ways in which science and literature intersect. George Levine complicated this notion of intersection by proposing that, in the nineteenth century, science and literature were not separate cultural sites,

precision. What does it mean, exactly, for literature to embody scientific ideas? What sort of assimilation happens when literature intersects with science, and how does it go about transforming received concepts from the fact-driven empiricism of scientific discourse?

We can look for an answer to these questions in Victorian novels themselves. Take, for instance, the following passage from *Daniel Deronda*, in which Eliot's narrator compares the "emotional intellect" of art with the "unemotional intellect" of science in order to show how they draw from and respond to one another:

Men may dream in demonstrations, and cut out an illusory world in the shape of axioms, definitions, and propositions, with a final exclusion of fact signed Q.E.D. No formulas for thinking will save us mortals from mistake in our imperfect apprehension of the matter to be thought about. And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be – the more comprehensive massive life feeding theory with new material, as the sensibility of the artist seizes combinations which science explains and justifies.⁵⁰

The Victorian novel does just this when it "seizes combinations which science explains and justifies," and uses such combinations to create "its passionate vision of possibilities." Eliot's narrator equates art with a "comprehensive massive life" that does

but one culture. Levine's "one culture" model set the tone for debates about science and literature since the 1980s; it was part of a wider recognition in critical theory that there are no clear generic boundaries between fiction and non-fiction and that science cannot be afforded cultural priority as the site of objective truth. Critics since Levine have embraced the close relationship between literature and science while rejecting the simplicity of the "one culture" formulation. Helen Small, for instance, argues that revising to acknowledge the important differences between science and literature means overlooking the serious critiques that each makes of the other. Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 1983 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); George Levine, *One Culture: Essays in Science and Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Helen Small, *Love's Madness*.

⁵⁰ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (London: Penguin, 2003), 514.

much more than absorb facts from science and theory; it is always “feeding theory with new material.” In fact it has the potential to permeate all aspects of factual and theoretical knowledge, so that “demonstrations” and “axioms, definitions, and propositions” are all infused by dreams and illusions; in the preceding sentence she writes: “The driest argument has its hallucinations.” The artist or novelist experiments with scientific theories by materializing the numerous possibilities they open up and envisioning possibilities they have not yet imagined.

In the novel form, the logic of experiment can become a formal device producing multiple and sometimes quirky permutations of human personhood. The literary experiment on which I focus is therefore quite different from what is generally meant by “experimental literature,” whether the determinist scientism of Zola’s naturalism or the self-consciously *outré* techniques of Futurist and Surrealist authors. Victorian novels experiment with scientific ideas by giving those ideas human form and setting them against one another; a novel can hold as possible more than one way of accounting for the human person at one time.

In the place of the objective description and explanation after-the-fact that characterize the aims of scientific psychology during the period at hand, the novel capitalizes on its traditional capacity to narrate a process, pointing out precisely what is tentative and subject to change, and thus creating new knowledge as the story unfolds. This opposition between description/explanation and narration is one that extends and modifies Georg Lukács’s narrate versus describe paradigm. Although I too associate narration with participation and experience and description with observation, I do so with an important caveat. For Lukács, the observer who describes is “a contemporary to what he observes,” whereas the narrator can “retrospectively” judge which details have

significance and make selections accordingly.⁵¹ My use of scientific description versus novelistic narration reverses this paradigm. While scientific writing is conducted after the experiment in order to describe and explain the stable, empirical, objective knowledge already produced, novelistic narration can proceed in-the-moment and can *be* the experiment itself. The types of narrative experiment on which this project focuses are creative and participatory.

Regarding the literature-science relationship in this light can also allow us to see the creative dimensions of scientific narration. While my focus in this dissertation is on the novel's experiments with form and personhood, my project identifies two ways in which the psychologists and natural historians featured in its pages – whose work was after all never isolated from fictional treatments of the same material – also participated in narrative experiments with human life. Charles Darwin, for one, created a method and a language for portraying a natural world that creates its own laws as it develops. In other words, Darwin invents a processual logic of formation, of form-in-process, that novelists like Dickens would also use as the formal logic of their fiction. Secondly, Victorian scientific writing – particularly psychological writing on the nature of human consciousness – struggled with its own methodological emphasis on objective, accurate, detached explanations. As a discipline that had still not cut its ties completely from introspective philosophy – the first psychology journal *Mind*, for instance, was subtitled “A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy” – psychology inhabited a curiously broad and undefined role in the cultural discourse of the period. Papers about the nature of mind were printed alongside fiction and poetry in periodicals;

⁵¹ Georg Lukács, “Narrate or Describe,” *Writer & Critic and Other Essays* (New York: Merlin, 1970), 128

psychologists George Henry Lewes and E.S. Dallas were also prolific critics of literature and embedded within literary circles. Psychological articles frequently featured strange vignettes and metaphors of nervous bodies that one might expect to find in the pages of sensation fiction rather than in scientific writing. Psychology was a nebulous site of discourse that was both framing itself as a distinct form of knowledge and constantly troubling its own logic of objective and detached epistemology. As my third chapter shows, the discrepancies that psychology was discovering in its understanding of “sensation” provide a representative example of how scientific writing produced the very same oppositions we find in the novel between a unified, mind-centered self in control of itself and a self as a heterogeneous set of processes of sensory adaptation to a world, as well as between a discourse of strategic control and creative tactical narratives. The difference is that the novel embraced a methodology of an open and flexible experiment that could generate possibilities rather than truths, stories rather than explanations. Reading nineteenth-century scientific and literary experiments side by side, this project demonstrates that it is in the novel that we find some of the most innovative methods of investigation into embodied forms of human experience.

CHAPTER ONE

The First Person in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*

*Hitherto I have recorded in detail the events of my insignificant existence: to the first ten years of my life, I have given almost as many chapters. But this is not to be a regular autobiography: I am only bound to invoke memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest; therefore I now pass a space of eight years almost in silence: a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection.*¹

When Jane Eyre informs us at the beginning of her tenth chapter that “this is not to be a regular autobiography” (149), she steps into her own story and calls to our attention that there is someone writing, *someone* in control of this narrative; the story of Jane Eyre is also supposedly a story *by* Jane Eyre, whom we understand to have an acute awareness of her narrative task and of the structure of her tale. Such “authorial” asides, which recur in both *Jane Eyre* and Charlotte Brontë’s later novel *Villette*, remind us that these are “first person” narratives – a form which gained in popularity in the Victorian era² – in which we understand a character both through her life story and through the way she chooses to tell it. Criticism of this autodiegetic narrative style tends to concentrate on

¹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard Nemesvari (Ontario: Broadview, 2002), 149. Subsequent references to this novel will be cited by page number in the text.

² Fictional autobiography was, of course, not a nineteenth century invention; it had important precursors in the eighteenth-century novel, most notably in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, as well as in the popular eighteenth-century epistolary form. The origin of this novel form has been traced to both spiritual autobiographies and Restoration science writing (for the latter, see Melinda Snow, “The Origins of Defoe’s First-Person Narrative Technique: An Overlooked Aspect of the Rise of the Novel,” *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 6 no.3 (1976): 175-87. Susan Lanser notes that “[f]ictional autobiography was still young in 1847” and that *Jane Eyre* was preceded by relatively few *female* novels that created a “public voice,” for instance work by Mary Brunton, Mary Martha Sherwood, and Anne Brontë. Susan Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 177.

the gaps and convergences between the “I” of the narrator and the “I” of the character, as if in first-person narration there are, at any one time, two “persons” present, only one of whom holds what we privilege as an ultimate authority. But just how is this narrative person constructed and understood? And in what sense is this person “first”? In the spirit of Jonathan Culler’s call for more critical scrutiny of that other decidedly Victorian style of narration – that of the “omniscient” narrator – this chapter will interrogate the “first-person,” that singular term of identity and authorship that pins down the “voice” of narration to an already-formed individual subject, a person with a story.³

Traditional critical assessments of narrative in these Brontë novels, and other fictional autobiographies of the nineteenth century and beyond, draw on the structuralist work of Gérard Genette, who offers a syntactic (rather than an interpretive) model for narrative. Much of this criticism draws from Genette’s chapter on “voice” and tends to focus on the process by which a character has attained the authority to narrate her own story.⁴ Although such studies have generated rich readings of Brontë’s fiction, I want to suspend the tendency to think about these narrators primarily through the lens of a character-narrator continuum, since this is to read narrative backwards, attributing narrative to character development and thus preempting any attempt to interrogate its basis and structure.⁵ By calling into question the very “person” of first-person narration

³ Jonathan Culler, “Omniscience.” *Narrative* 12.1 (2004): 22-34.

⁴ Genette considers the “time of narrating,” the “narrative level,” and the “person” as the constitutive elements of narrative voice (215). His interest is in parsing the components of what he already understands to be the “narrating act” (228). In his assessment of autobiographical narration, Genette’s focus is on the point at which the hero (or, presumably, the heroine) reaches the point at which he can tell his own story, thus creating a closed circuit between story and discourse (see 226-27). Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

⁵ A plethora of readings of both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* have focused on the development of the character into the subject with the ability and authority to write the self. G. Armour Craig’s offers

instead of assuming that personhood is there “first,” before narrative commences, I aim to pave the way for a clearer appreciation of how narrative contributed to new ways of understanding the production of a process-driven self in the Victorian era. Brontë, I argue, engages with early psychological notions of the person that were negotiating a shift from an immaterial self located in the mind to a heterogeneous, embodied self produced through continual adaptation to a milieu. Reading her work alongside these debates allows us to see the centrality of narrative and the “first-person” to a larger cultural transformation in definitions of personhood as adaptive, complex, and process-driven.

an early example of such criticism (although Craig complicates the paradigm by arguing that, by the end of the novel, Jane Eyre has “narrated herself into silence”). “The Unpoetic Compromise: On the Relationship Between Private Vision and Social Order in the Nineteenth-Century English Fiction,” *Society and Self in the Novel*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 38. Other noticeable examples have included Rosemarie Bodenheimer’s “Jane Eyre in Search of her Story,” *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 16 (1980): 387-402 and Janet Freeman’s “Speech and Silence in *Jane Eyre*,” *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 24.4 (1984): 683-700.

For a criticism of such an approach to the novel via Genette’s paradigm, see Joan D. Peters, “Finding a Voice: Towards a Woman’s Discourse of Dialogue in the Narration of *Jane Eyre*,” *Studies in the Novel* 23.2 (1991): 217-236. Although Lisa Sternlieb argues for a reading of *Jane Eyre* that recognizes a need to study the narrative separately from the plot, she reads narrator through character in claiming that the narrator “undermines” the plot in “revenge” for what has already happened to her as a character. “*Jane Eyre*: ‘Hazarding Confidences.’” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 53.4 (1999), 454, 464. Feminist readings that similarly read Jane’s attainment of narrative as female authority also privilege this developmental model: see Vicky Simpson, “‘The Eagerness of a Listener Quickens the Tongue of a Narrator’: Storytelling and Autobiography in *Jane Eyre*,” *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 4 no.3 (2008).

Similar readings of *Villette* tend to privilege the narrator’s authority as that which is attained through her trials and lessons as a character, often through the necessity of M. Paul’s death: see Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, “‘Faithful Narrator’ or ‘Partial Eulogist’: First-Person Narration in Brontë’s *Villette*,” *Journal of Narrative Technique* 15 no.3 (1985): 244-255 and Brenda R. Silver, “The Reflecting Reader in *Villette*,” *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, 1983), 90-111. Silver argues, for instance, that “Lucy... has self-consciously structured her use of silence and revelation to immerse us in a world as complex and conflicted as that which she has herself experienced” (90), thus assuming that it is necessarily to understand her experience as a character before we can properly understand her narrative.

Although the grammatical terms “third-” “second-” and “first-person” are usually understood to refer to perspective or point of view, they also ask us to imagine the presence of *someone*, an individual: the narrator. This chapter asks precisely how – through what sorts of practices and operations – narrative is produced by *and produces* a “person.” That is, I am interested in a method of reading that understands narrative practices as *forming* rather than merely ensuing from a subject. While Brontë herself stands behind Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, we must not confuse her authorial presence for their narrative agency; both narrators are produced as part of the novels they would have us believe they are writing. In exploring narrative as a site of identity production, I ask two questions in this chapter about first-person narrative. What, precisely, is the nature of the *authority* that we understand as belonging to a narrator, that which permits the construction of environments or fictional worlds and a “former self” who moves within them? That is, what sort of world-making and self-making process is involved in this type of narrative? And in what way does narrative come to produce a certain voice or identity – a person – independently of the notion that the narrator uses the personal pronoun and is therefore identical to the character in her story? In other words, how are we to understand “person” through *narrator* rather than primarily through character?

In *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, first-person narrative performs two interdependent operations: world-making and maneuvering. The narrative process involves both structuring a plan of a world (world-making) and narrating one’s own movements within it (maneuvering); it involves stepping outside in order to set limits on, and rules governing, that world, and also dwelling inside it.⁶ As a result, the operations of

⁶ Of course, the world-making function is shared between author (Brontë) and narrator (Jane Eyre/Lucy Snowe), but, given my focus on the process-oriented elements of narrative, I here

narrative can appear to be quite contradictory: “tactical” movements often seem to interrupt, subvert, resist, or deviate from the “strategic” world-making apparatus of the narrative structure. But ultimately these operations are interdependent: world-making requires interruptions in order to lay down its rules, and maneuvering requires those rules in order to find a way around and yet within them. In setting up this relationship between “strategic” and “tactical” operations, I am using the language of Michel de Certeau, from his theory of the productive practices of individual consumers in everyday life – their ability to navigate, alter, and poach upon the territory and rules of others (particularly institutional powers).⁷ De Certeau’s model gives us a framework for an alternative reading of the “person” through operational practices, instead of through a retracing of the character’s development into an individual with the power to tell – and with authority over – her own story. De Certeau’s concept of tactics and strategy allows for a more nuanced reading of how narrative operates in Brontë’s novels than we might find in, for instance, traditional critical uses of Michel Foucault’s model of disciplinary power and resistance, in which all narrative operations tend to be reduced to strategic functions.⁸

accept the “myth” of autobiographical authorship that would have us believe Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe are both narrators and authors of their own stories.

⁷ See my introduction section beginning on page 16 for an overview of Michel de Certeau’s theory of strategy and tactics.

⁸ Readings of narrative authority inspired by Michel Foucault tend to rely on the paradigm D. A. Miller uses when referring to narrative discipline in the Victorian novel. Miller argues that “our attention needs to turn from the discipline narrated in the novel to the discipline inherent in the novel’s technique of narration” (52). The novel “reinvent[s]” the “policing power” that it “censures” in its “very practice of novelistic representation,” including narrative practices (20). Interestingly, Miller recognizes that there is not necessarily a real “person” prior to narration (he refers here to omniscient narration, although the point carries to first-person narrative), but his reading of this fact turns on the assumption that the illusion of the “narrator” is another

Brontë's novels produce and negotiate between strategy and tactical author/ity, allowing us to experience two potentially opposed dimensions of the "person": a stable, autonomous, "first" person with strategic world-making powers that exist *prior* to the narrative itself, and a heterogeneous product of narrative's tactical "ways of operating," of diverse, often multiple and fragmented processes that generate or perform a self.⁹ By comparing *Villette* (1853) to *Jane Eyre* (1847), we can chart a shift from a disciplinary to a tactical mode of narration indicative, I will argue, of a larger cultural shift away from theories of the "person" as stable, unified, and irreducible, and towards an understanding of the person as an assemblage of contiguous parts or processes. Furthermore, this study attests to the close relationship that emerged in the Victorian era between the construction of story and the construction of "person" – that is, between narrating the self and that self's composition and identity.

De Certeau's logic of everyday practices provides a particularly appropriate framework for approaching Brontë's novels, because a model that looks at strategy from a tactical perspective can find fruitful ground between epistemology and phenomenology – that is, beyond the dialectic between a Foucauldian approach that focuses on the structure and larger discourses of power and one that understands the world as experienced as though from inside the self. Although Foucault goes to great lengths to explain how we come to think of ourselves as if from the outside, as a historian he is not interested in how individuals experience the process of becoming an

technique by which the novel internalizes disciplinary power. *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), xiv.

individual. He is consequently not all that concerned with aspects of the self that are not a function of the larger workings of power.¹⁰ Psychoanalytic approaches to literature, conversely, tend to lose sight of larger cultural processes in assuming that all development takes place within an individual psyche, and they often get bogged down in a reductive model of repression versus expression. De Certeau's notion of the interaction between strategy and tactics can offer a way of thinking about the psychological construction of a person within the larger structures at work in the world. It can address a *being in the world*, where that action of being is not always overdetermined by the world, but can maneuver itself tactically with full awareness of the world's strategic organization. Such a perspective is particularly important to this project not only because the concept of first-person narrative is so caught up with the production and authorization of a person-who-narrates, but also because at this particular moment in the mid-century, the combination of strategy and tactics that we see at work in Brontë's fiction is part of a larger cultural movement to reconceptualize the formation of personal identity.

¹⁰ As Judith Butler points out in *The Psychic Life of Power*, "Foucault is notoriously taciturn on the topic of the psyche." She goes on to argue, however, that "an account of subjection... must be traced in the turns of psychic life." *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 18. In fact, Butler argues that the psyche or soul cannot be reduced to "an imprisoning effect in the service of normalization," as (according to her reading of his work) Foucault would have it in his argument that "the soul is the prison of the body" (87, qtd. 85). Instead, it is in the psyche that Butler locates elements of *resistance* to "the regularization that Foucault ascribes to normalizing discourse" (86). Butler attempts to extract this psyche or soul of resistance from *Foucault's* work and thereby recuperate Foucault and Freud in relation to one another. However, for this move to work she must treat the "soul" as a real entity as opposed to what it is for Foucault: the invention and product of discourse. Instead of participating in this recuperative project, I want to try to push beyond the dialectical problem of Foucauldian and Freudian approaches to the subject. De Certeau's strategy-tactics model offers an alternative formulation of psychic life within larger institutional structures.

I. Mind and Body: Brontë and Nineteenth-Century Personal Identity

In order to understand the cultural logic of Brontë's fiction and the source of its continuing appeal, we need to situate her novels in the debate about personhood, specifically how early nineteenth-century theories of human intelligence and personal identity reshaped the Enlightenment debate between essentialism and empiricism. Challenging Cartesian and spiritualist proponents of an essential, immaterial mind defined as soul, John Locke had argued that the mind was a product of experience. The "sameness of a rational Being," or that being's "personal Identity," consisted only in the continuity of an accumulative consciousness.¹¹ David Hume, in his argument that the self is an always-shifting bundle of sensations and ideas, used Locke's very model to challenge his notion that the human mind is ontologically distinct from – and in control of – the body's physical interactions with the world. For Hume, a stable personal identity became little more than a fiction.¹² As we enter the nineteenth-century, the newly emergent discipline of psychology continued to think within this same mind-body problematic, particularly as a growing empiricism shifted the terms of the debate

¹¹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690, ed. Peter H. Niddich (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979), 335. Locke explained self as inseparable from consciousness: "For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity*, i.e. the sameness of a rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that *Person*" (335). This "same *self*," that is, exists only "as far as the same consciousness can extend to Actions past or to come" (336).

¹² Hume, like Locke, imagined individuals as accumulations of sense-impressions, but he pushed this theory beyond Locke's attempt to hold on to some sort of ontologically distinct mind: "If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of the self is deriv'd; and consequently there is no such idea." *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton & Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 164.

from theories of the soul and its afterlife to an investigation of physiological process and the science of mind.¹³

Two major issues structured this debate, issues inseparable from the question of first-person narrative this chapter explores. The first concerned the nature of the “I” or the self-reflective “self” known as the “first-person.” Is this so-called first-person located in the mind or the body? Is it a unity or a compound entity? And should it be studied objectively or by way of subjective experience? The second issue concerned *agency*. Is the mind “first” in the sense of a central, controlling agent that “oversees” psychological and physiological processes, or are psychological phenomena merely passive manifestations of material processes that occur elsewhere in the body? The latter would challenge the “firstness” of the reflective self, thus its autonomy, and thus the knowability of motivation. In this case, agency is either distributed among various faculties or it is a by-product of constant negotiation between self and sensory stimuli.

Although a cacophony of voices characterized this debate, their points of disagreement can nevertheless be boiled down into three main positions.¹⁴ The associationist school was an empiricist approach born out of Locke and Hume’s belief

¹³ For an account of this shift as it emerged out of the eighteenth century, see Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ The “positions” characterizing this debate are arranged differently by Rick Rylance in his seminal study of Victorian psychology. Rylance contrasts the associationist school with “faculty psychology,” a conservative approach to the mind as unified but characterized by hierarchical faculties. He also treats physiological developments, including materialism and phrenology, in a separate chapter. Although I suggest similar groupings to Rylance – whose methods of comparing these schools are fluid and nuanced – I use the label of a “unity” school rather than “faculty psychology.” This is because although original proponents of the hierarchical faculties were unity thinkers who insisted that these faculties were all elements of one mind, the language of faculties was instrumental in developing physiological accounts of a much more fragmented mind. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between different types of faculty psychology. Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

that the mind is composed of sensations and ideas generated by sensory stimuli and organized by principles of association.¹⁵ Closely related to this first position was a physiological approach, under which I include all discourses that privileged physical processes and organs of mind, from the staunchest materialisms to attempts to understand physiological processes without insisting upon a causal link to psychological events.¹⁶ The school of phrenology fell somewhere between these two extremes. Though ridiculed as a pseudo-science by the likes of George Henry Lewes, phrenology reached widespread popularity and evidenced a gradually expanding public acceptance that one could read the activities of the mind on the body's surface.¹⁷ Phrenology drew upon a long history of the mind as possessing faculties, but – following the work of Franz Joseph Gall – it located each faculty in a distinct physical organ.¹⁸ The third position I will label a “unity” approach, under the umbrella of which

¹⁵ For Hume, there were three “natural laws” of association: resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. Hartley focused most especially on contiguity, although he was also interested in frequency and the vibrations of mind. James Mill similarly focused on the mind's passive workings via contiguity, but he stressed the law of frequency, which determined the strength of association.

¹⁶ This more balanced psychophysical parallelism was epitomized by Alexander Bain's work in the 1850s-70s; for him, mind and physiology were “two sides of the same reality.” Daniel Robinson, “Introduction: Mind, Brain, and Modules,” *The Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 136.

¹⁷ George Combe's *The Constitution of Man* (1828) was one of the most popular books between 1825 and 1850. According to Boyd Hilton, who is quoted by David Newsome and referred to by Rylance, “it was possibly the most widely-read book after the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*” during this period. Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 198; David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture* (Rutgers University Press, 1999), 211. In the Advertisement to the ninth edition of Combe's book, published in 1860, the editor claimed that it had sold 96,500 editions. George Combe, *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects*, 9th ed (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, 1860), v. For more detail on the immense popularity of Combe's book, see Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 120–21.

¹⁸ In giving locations to the faculties of mind, phrenology built upon a conservative tradition of understanding the mind as a collection of faculties, which had roots in medieval theology. These faculties were traditionally organized hierarchically, from the lower (feeling, desire, appetite) shared with animals, to the higher (including reason, faith, and will) distinguishing humans.

I include orthodox faculty psychology (which was indebted to medieval theology), Scottish “Common Sense” philosophy, vitalism, and Romanticism, all of which, to varying extents, put forward theories of the mind as irreducible to its parts or to the body’s physiological processes. This position, which held to an *a priori* definition of mind similar to a soul, emerged most often in defensive responses to, and sometimes vehement attacks upon, associationist and physiological positions.

On the subject of an “I” or self, associationist psychology implied more than it was willing to affirm. While it tended not to address the question of a self or identity directly, its grounding assumption – that the human mind is a blank prior to experience – reduced the self to a process of sensation and ideation. Although David Hartley, the first proponent of a concrete associationist psychology (1749), was a dualist who believed in an immortal soul, he attributed the metaphysical aspects of identity, including love and will, to “mechanical” processes. Hartley saw the brain and nervous system as *machines* – a view shared by James Mill in 1829 – in which sensory stimuli produced brain vibrations and sensations. Although some associationists, like Thomas Brown and John Stuart Mill, attempted to hold onto what they called an “absolute nature” of the mind that corresponded to the subjective experience of a unified and “permanent” “identity of self,” associationist psychology as a whole treated the concept of self as a by-product of *process*, of the complex interactions of the body and mind with

Phrenology stripped away the hierarchies, and along with them the mind-body dualism to the faculties of mind. Gall divided the brain into 27 organs, corresponding to the faculties, sentiments, and propensities of mind; under Spurzheim’s classification this increased to 35.

its milieu.¹⁹ As we might expect, the associationists disagreed with those who held on to the traditional notion of a unified self on the basis of that self's fundamental composition.

Common sense philosopher Thomas Reid took issue with Locke's brand of associationism for leading to the conclusion that "no man is the same person any two moments of his life."²⁰ Vital to such unity thinkers was the importance of the mind's indivisibility, since to link the self to matter was to allow it to divide into parts and operations. The "self or I," Reid argues, is "permanent" and cannot be reduced to its processes: "A person is a *monad*, and is not divisible into parts."²¹ Those adhering to the notion of a unified self capable of enduring over time also accused associationism of opening the door to a materialist view of the mind which left no "space" for the soul. Materialists like Joseph Priestley and William Lawrence had indeed built upon Hartley's work, but they departed from his dualism in their criticism of metaphysical conceptions of "self" as located over and above the body; as Priestley wrote, "man consists wholly of

¹⁹ Thomas Brown, *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, vol. 1 (Boston: Glazier, Masters, 1826), 133. Many associationists, particularly Thomas Brown and John Stuart Mill, attempted to hold on to an "absolute nature" of the mind. Brown, for instance argues that "[t]he belief of the identity of self, then, as the one permanent subject of the transient feelings remembered by us, arises from a *law of thought*, which is essential to the very constitution of mind... It is universal, immediate, and irresistible" (133). This "law of thought" corresponded to a need to account for the *experience* of identity as one indivisible and permanent phenomena. Many associationist psychologists – including Hartley – were indeed attracted to the idea of an immaterial soul. However, this immaterial soul appears to have little or no role in a self produced by adaptive processes between mind, body, and milieu.

²⁰ Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (London: J. Bell, 1785), 336.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 318-19. The Common Sense school refused to reduce the self to its constitutive actions, since we experience ourselves first and foremost as one indivisible entity. Reid argued in 1785 that "I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling. I am something that thinks, and acts, and suffers... that self or I, to which they belong, is permanent" (318). William Hamilton, who popularized Reid's work in the 1850s, related this permanence to consciousness itself: consciousness is not a special faculty, he argued; rather, it underpins all operations of the faculties as a "unity of consciousness." *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature, Education and University Reform* (London: Longman, 1853), 51.

matter.”²² Such views were derided for their radical atheism (although Priestley attempted to hold on to a concept of the immortal soul), and for their implication that there was no self-sovereign power of mind able to oversee the body. Although phrenologists were hesitant to reduce all elements of self to matter, their division of the mind’s faculties (including such sentiments as Hope, Wonder, and Ideality) into physical organs implied that the self was a compound product of the brain’s organization.²³ On this basis they earned the scorn of unity-proponent David Drummond (1829), who saw this division of mind as leading to the unconscionable conclusion that each individual is actually a collection of “distinct and independent existences.”²⁴ He felt that the concept of the mind as a collection rendered impossible “that unity of consciousness which is, in other words, a man’s being *himself*.”²⁵ In reply, Murray Paterson defended phrenology’s model of a compound identity against the charge that it undermined any sense of self: “The pronoun I is just as applicable and

²² Joseph Priestly, *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (London: Johnson, 1777), 160. William Lawrence (1783-1867) believed that mind was a product of matter; he opposed the claim that “the intellectual phenomena of mind require an immaterial principle superadded to the brain” (110). Lawrence was forced to withdraw his 1819 *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man* (London: Callow, 1819) in response to a campaign which labeled its materialist claims blasphemous. His “zoological study of man” (573) was in many ways a precursor to Darwin’s *Origin of Species*.

²³ Critics of phrenology were quick to label its claims materialist. A report in the *Glasgow Enquirer* stated that “It is impossible for any man who is a believer in the separate existence of the mind, or its spiritual nature, to look on [phrenology] with complacency; and such as would avoid the degrading perplexities of materialism we would recommend to turn a deaf ear to the plausible discussions of its supporters.” Quoted in John Van Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2004), 77. For phrenology’s attempts to defend itself from accusations of materialism, see “Phrenology, versus Materialism,” *The American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 5 (1843): 37–39 and George Combe’s chapter on “Materialism” in *A System of Phrenology* (Edinburgh: Anderson, 1830), 631–38.

²⁴ David Drummond, *Objections to Phrenology, Being The Substance of a Series of Papers Communicated to The Calcutta Phrenological Society* (Calcutta: Smith and Thacker, 1829), 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 43. Thomas Stone advanced a similar argument, complaining that according to phrenology, “the brain is thus made an aggregate of so many distinct minds.” *The Evidences Against the System of Phrenology: being the substance of a paper read at an extraordinary meeting of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan & Stewart, 1828), 21.

personal to three or four organs at the time of their action, as it is to the whole³⁵, if they happened to be all in action.”²⁶ In claiming that the “I” is applicable to a (random) combination of organs at any isolated moment in time, Paterson opposes both the notion of the “I” as a unified whole and the idea of the self as a (gradual) product of the body’s processes. The question of the mind’s compound or unitary nature had serious implications for theories of insanity: Could parts of the mind be disordered without rendering the person’s whole identity deranged?²⁷

Fundamental to all aspects of this debate about the nature of the “I” was whether the *experience* of that very “first person” should contribute to an understanding of its composition and location. Predictably, for the unity school – particularly Common Sense philosophers (Reid) and Romantics (Coleridge and Wordsworth) – subjective experience of the mind was vital to understanding its obviously unified nature as well as its separation from and power over the body.²⁸ But for phrenologist George Combe,

²⁶ Drummond, *Objections*, 38. Paterson’s reply to Drummond is included in Drummond’s own text as an article titled “The Phenomena of Mind Can *Only* Be Accounted For on Phrenological Principles” (25–41). According to Drummond, Paterson’s answer was originally published in the Calcutta *John Bull* newspaper in 1827.

²⁷ The debate about self and mind in psychology was paralleled in studies of mental pathology, which was summarized in an article in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* in 1859 as follows: “The question hinges on what is called the ‘solidarity’... the oneness of the mind itself. The supporters of the theory of monomania speak of the mind as a compound, consisting of many distinct faculties or attributes, any one of which may be disordered or subverted independently of the others. The opponents of this theory say that the mind is one absolutely, and if deranged, is deranged as a whole.” “On Monomania,” *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* 9 (October 1856), 504.

²⁸ In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth defends what Rylance calls this “first-person” approach to the mind: “who shall parcel out / His intellect by geometric rules, / Split like a province into round and square?” He praised Coleridge: “to thee, unblended by these formal arts, / The unity of all hath been revealed.” William Wordsworth, “The Prelude (1850),” *The Prelude, 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, & Stephen Gill (London: Norton, 1979), Book II, 203–205; 220–221.

Rylance points out that this “‘first-person/third-person’ problem” concerned the question of “whether we should take the primarily introspective stance of the experiencing individual... [or] strive for a purportedly more objective (‘scientific’), and certainly more

consciousness could be deceptive. In convincing us that the mind is one unified whole, consciousness blinds us to its composite nature.²⁹ For Combe, a true understanding of “the plurality of the instruments of thought” required a scientific and “third-person,” or external, view of the mind as an object of knowledge, rather than a first-person approach to the mind as an experience of consciousness which must be understood on its own terms.³⁰ At issue in the debate over whether the self is one or several, then, is a question of perspective and approach, of epistemology versus intuition, which boiled down to this: is the person we are concerned with here the “third” or the “first” person?

The answer one gave to this first question largely determined one’s approach to the second pivotal issue: the question of agency. Agency was a central tenant of an orthodox unity position, which held that the mind had to assume the role of director to the body’s (potentially unruly) impulses.³¹ Emerging out of a theological view of the

distanced, account by an uninvolved observer who adopts a “third-person” stance.” See Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*, 41.

Traditional, eighteenth-century arguments for the immateriality and indivisibility of the soul tended to make use of this very issue; Samuel Clarke, for instance, in his heated debate with Anthony Collins, argued that we intuitively experience ourselves as one person, and that there was no need for an empirical (third-person) study of consciousness: “Every Man feels and knows by Experience what Consciousness is, better than any Man can explain it... And it is not at all necessary to define more particularly what *it is*; but abundantly sufficient that we know and agree what it is *not*, viz., that it is not a Multitude of distinct and separate Consciousnesses.” *The Works of Samuel Clarke* (London: Knapton, 1738), 790.

²⁹ Combe wrote that “It is extremely difficult to determine whether the feeling of personal identity indicated by the pronoun *I* is connected with a particular organ, or the result of the general action of the whole organs.” He argued that this difficulty – caused by consciousness – was the cause of erroneous assumptions about the unity of mind. George Combe, *A System of Phrenology*, 531.

³⁰ George Combe, *Essays on Phrenology, or an Inquiry into the Principles and Utility of the System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim and into the Objections Made Against It*. 1819 (Philadelphia: Carey, 1822), 74.

³¹ Unity thinkers did not necessarily all see this unified agency operating in one way. As Owen Flanagan points out, there is a difference between a unity approach that favored a completely self-aware unity and one that concedes a subdivision of mind but stresses the unifying agency of consciousness. Flanagan proposes two theories of unity: the “simple thesis” that “the mind is the soul, and therefore, one simple, indivisible, incorporeal, and completely self-aware unity” and an

body's sinful passions and feeding into the emergent Victorian ideology of "self-help," this disciplinary role of mind depended upon the assumption that there is one mind per body, and that this mind can manage the body's impulses. For the associationists, however, agency was not quite the point; there was no innate "manager" in the associative process by which sensory stimuli were organized into ideas. Nor, then, could the conscious mind direct the body on the basis of that information (specifically, ideas of pleasure and pain). Hartley's mechanistic view drew outspoken criticism from Coleridge for its passive model of the mind. Imagination, Coleridge insisted in 1817, was a creative force whose agency could not be reduced to the machinery of associative processes; it was "the living power and prime agent of all human perception."³² For Coleridge, the primary function of mind was disciplinary; it must "control, determine, and modify the phantasmal chaos of association."³³ Opponents to phrenology voiced similar concerns about that system's *distribution* of agency amongst the various faculties and corresponding organs of the brain.

emerging "modified thesis," which "allows some subdividing of mental operations... but sees consciousness as a pontifical, unifying force... Indeed, on the modified view, consciousness has both access to all mental happenings and power over them." This "modified thesis" implies the emergence of a more disciplinary function of mind. Owen J. Flanagan, *The Science of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 201.

³² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria," *The Major Works, including Biographia Literaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 313.

³³ *Ibid.*, 218.

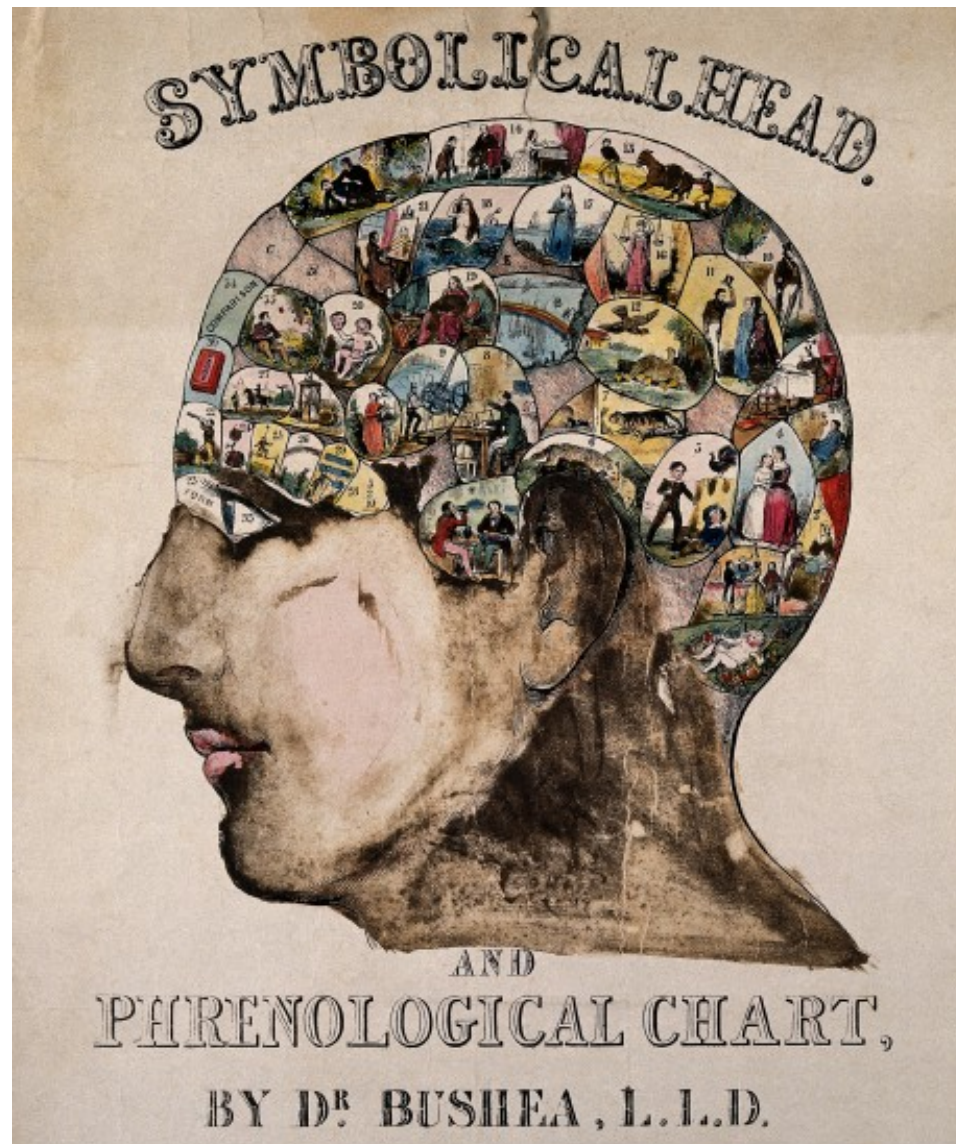


Figure 1: [O.S. Fowler], A phrenological chart of the head divided into over thirty images, mostly of individual people performing the faculties. (London: Straker, c. 1845); Wellcome Collection, 27921i

John Abernethy, who was known for his vitalist opposition to his pupil William Lawrence's materialism, conceded in 1821 that he could offer few "rational objection[s]" to phrenology's organization of the brain and its actions, but he did resist its potentially materialist conclusions.³⁴ Above all, he refuted the assumption that each organ possesses "its own perceptiveness, intelligence, and will."³⁵ If each organ did indeed have such agency, he reasons, it would have to "compromise" with other organs on a regular basis in order for a person to act, and there could not possibly be a "committee" deliberating those compromises.³⁶ "If an intelligent, discretionary, and controlling power be granted," he argued, "I feel no disposition to demand any more."³⁷ Abernethy was not exaggerating the claims of phrenology when he complained of its distribution of agency. George Combe indeed described the faculties of mind as if they each had personalities, minds of their own: "Benevolence, Veneration, and Conscientiousness... have not received direct and intended gratification. They may have anxiously and constantly watched the animal faculties, longing for the hour when they would say Enough."³⁸ "Every faculty desires gratification," wrote Combe; maps of the mind produced by phrenologists imagined the head as a collection of individual personalities (see Figure 1).³⁹ Phrenology took agency away from a central intelligence or directing

³⁴ John Abernethy, *Reflections on Gall and Spurzheim's System of Physiognomy and Phrenology* (London: Longman, 1821), 48. Abernethy confessed: "I readily acknowledge my inability to offer any rational objection to Gall's and Spurzheim's system of phrenology, as affording a satisfactory explanation of the motives of human actions" (48-49). He did object, however, to the lack of a "controlling power" to explain "[t]he perceptive and intellectual phænomena" (67).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁶ David Drummond had similar objections to phrenology on account of its distributed agency. If the organs acted independently, they needed a controlling force: "What connects and guides their jarring counsels?" Drummond, *Objections*, 43.

³⁷ Abernethy, *Reflections*, 67.

³⁸ George Combe, *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects*, 7th ed. (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, 1836), 65.

³⁹ George Combe, *A System of Phrenology*, 572.

mind and divided it up among competing, self-interested organs of mind whose collaboration continually shifted. According to Thomas Stone (1828), phrenology consequently “degraded [man] into the condition of a mere *automaton*; he has no more control over his own conduct than the hand of a time-piece has over the mechanism that directs it.”⁴⁰ At the mercy of the faculties’ individual “desires,” a person could be little more than a passive machine.

The central disagreement about agency, then, was *where* that agency came from and who or what was consequently in control. The answer determined what sort of self was imagined, since the notion of a first-person, the “I,” necessarily brings up the question of the “agent” of that person’s action. For the likes of Reid and Coleridge, mind is a “first” or *a priori* spirit with full authority over the body and complete autonomy in the production of identity. The self is *the* agent, pure and simple, of all its actions. That is to say, an individual possesses agency that is “given,” both in the sense that it is inherent and that it appears to be a transcendental or spiritual force that comes from somewhere beyond the individual’s physical being. In contrast, the Abernethy school was a branch of the unity position that was not as quick to dismiss physiological processes as a determinant of human action. For Abernethy, then, the self must be governed by a central intelligence, an independent power that organized the actions of the mind’s organs. Agency, then, was closely aligned with physical processes and was their manager. For phrenologists like Combe, however, the self emerged as a shifting product of the combined action among select faculties, each with its own desire and will. Combe’s agency was therefore not Abernethy’s central power, but was distributed; it emerged from inside the body, from discrete and concrete locations within the brain.

⁴⁰ Stone, *Evidences*, 106.

Finally, the implication of Hartley's associationist school was that what we mistake for an individual's agency is in fact merely the result of passive manifestations of sensory processes. What we *believe* to be the mind's power over the body obscures the true "agent" at work: process, habit, and adaptability. In tracing these positions, we can demark the poles of a disagreement about the location and origin of an individual's agency, from a completely independent property of mind that is "first" or "given," and which has full disciplinary power over the body, to a property that emerges out of the body itself. In so defining the self, these poles represent two different ways to tell the story of how a person acts, thinks, feels, and comes to be understood (and to understand himself) as a person.

The logic by which these two approaches to the origin of a person's agency operate returns us to the issue of narrative. What we have here, in short, is one concept of the person in which the mind exerts power *over* the body (agency is outside the body), and another that imagines subjectivity emerging from a process of *thinking through the body*. Agency, in this second instance, emerges from inside; it is distributed within the body and enacted in its processes. These concepts of self and agency correspond to what we have called the strategic and tactical operations of narrative: on the one hand, the notion that there is, at "first," a person behind the narrative, and, on the other, the idea that narrative processes have their own tactical agencies that produce what we come to understand as a person. The mind-over-body approach, associated with the unity school and favoring a phenomenological/subjective perspective, makes mind into a strategic locus of power, a central intelligence responsible for determining the rules which govern the body's actions. A thinking-through-the-body – characteristic of both phrenological and associationist approaches – corresponds to de Certeau's tactical

operations in its heterogeneity, contingencies, and focus on processes. According to this tactical view, the mind's agency and the very "I" of identity and selfhood do not exist "first," prior to the (physiological) processes that produce them, often in adaptation to an environment. What is at stake here – in both nineteenth-century psychology and in narrative – is the very construction of the subject: whether it is produced *prior to* or *through* both narrative and the body's processes. A study of narrative tactics in Brontë's fictional autobiographies will reveal that "first-person" narrative, although usually read as a strategic authority over self and world, can also tactically undermine the very form of authority we are inclined to grant it. By means of artful evasions, fragmentations, and gaps, the tactical dimension of Brontë's narration *produces* a heterogeneous, composite person rather than the unified, stable individual who exists prior to, above, and beyond the world of the novel. In Brontë's hands, narrative and mind consequently come to have a great deal in common.

Charlotte Brontë entered the psychological debate about identity and changed its terms. While *Jane Eyre* produces a narrative authority that appears to justify a unity approach to a mind that controls a body, *Villette* was, if anything, more instrumental in experimenting with and reshaping for popular consumption theories of the "person" as multiple and multivalent rather than stable and unitary. As critics have noted, Brontë had an interest in popular phrenology.⁴¹ But to read her work productively alongside psychological and physiological developments is to see that novels like hers did much more than absorb and reflect theories of mind. Brontë's novels effectively

⁴¹ See Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Nicholas Dames, "The Clinical Novel: Phrenology and *Villette*," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 29 no. 9 (1996): 367-90; and Mary Armstrong, "Reading a Head: Jane Eyre, Phrenology, and the Homoerotics of Legibility," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33 no.1 (2005): 107-132.

reconceptualize the debate about how the “person” should be approached and understood. In her use of the “first-person” perspective, we could say that she follows the likes of the Romantics who preferred a subjective, first-person approach to the understanding of mind and identity, were it not for the fact that she completely reverses their conclusions. Whereas these unity thinkers used “first-person” experiences of consciousness to argue that the self and mind are irreducible, unified, and “first,” Brontë instead uses the subjective approach to construct a person whose experience of herself is much more congruent with phrenological and associationist schools of thought (which themselves tended to prefer scientific, “third-person” methods). It is especially clear in *Villette* that the “first-person narrator” experiences and narrates herself as fragmented, heterogeneous, and processural rather than as a unified and stable person. For Brontë, first-person narrative does not always put the “person” first, although this does appear to be the case in *Jane Eyre*, in which the narrator occupies a position outside the more heterogeneous experiential self. By reading the narrative of *Villette* in comparison with *Jane Eyre*, however, we see that Lucy Snowe’s narration can only be characterized by a sustained display of tactics that never succeeds in transforming itself into the strategic agency conventionally attributed to first-person narration.

II. Jane Eyre’s Narrative Strategies

In approaching the still widely-popular novel *Jane Eyre*, the critical tradition tends to focus on Brontë’s construction of a self-governing, disciplined individual, a cultivated liberal subject. Indeed, even critics who rethink or complicate this emphasis on the disciplinary dimension of the novel tend to acknowledge the ease with which *Jane*

Eyre calls for such an interpretation.⁴² But if we are to account for this perennial critical interest in just how – and indeed whether – Jane Eyre is the model of a self-regulated person, we need to ask the question: which Jane Eyre are we referring to? For the “I” of Brontë’s novel is both character and narrator, and despite their shared personal pronoun, their models of personhood are far from consistent. As a character, Jane is at times markedly *undisciplined*, at the mercy of conflicting passions, impulses, and faculties that arise from within her and give rise to unreflective action. Jane’s narrating voice, on the contrary, appears to come to us from a position outside – beyond and after – the world of the novel and the body of the character. *Hers* is the voice of regulation and discipline, of the self-contained and unified individual. In constructing this narrating self, Brontë draws upon traditional dualist Cartesian and unity-school models of the self, wherein the mind is immaterial, indivisible, and independent of the body and

⁴² Gaytri Chakravorty Spivak’s vital re-reading of the imperialism that undergirds the novel’s production of the female individual, for instance, complicates but relies upon Jane’s self-disciplined individuality. “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” *Critical Inquiry* 12 no.1 (1985): 243-261.

Critics who wish to rethink the subject produced by the novel, however, similarly rely upon the rebellious individualism inherent in the novel; James Buzard in *Disorienting Fiction*, offers a good example:

Foucauldian perspectives on *Jane Eyre* have highlighted those elements in the narrative that are devoted to the production of a model modern subject. It is certainly, forcefully true that the initial chapters... seem to indicate that the private history of Jane Eyre will encode an allegory about the birth of modern subjectivity out of the ruins of the ancien régime... Yet while Jane does acquire at Lowood lessons in the cultivation of interiority that stand her in good stead for the rest of the narrative, it would be a mistake, in view of the rapturous vision of intersubjectivity that ends the novel, simply to conclude (whether one approves of liberal individualism or mistrusts it) that such individualism is *in itself* the novel’s aim.

James Buzard, *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 210.

Jerome Beaty’s essay about the novel which begins by noting the “tenacity” of reader’s “first impressions” to the novel, tries to account for our assumptions about Jane’s rebellious individualism based on this very first impression, which “lets many of us get too closely involved with young Jane, too uncritically accepting of her worldview, enabling – virtually determining – the reading of *Jane Eyre* as a novel of rebellion and the legitimate assertion of the sovereignty of the self.” “St. John’s Way and the Wayward Reader,” *Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1996): 143.

its actions. The narrator, as pure consciousness and judgment, exerts supreme control over the world she creates and the bodies that move within it, including her own. She appears to speak, or write, as a unified, singular, and autonomous individual, an *a priori* self or “first” person, from a stable (if unnamed) place after and above the world she is supposed to have once inhabited.⁴³ *Jane Eyre* is the epitome of what Wayne Booth calls a “self-conscious” narrator, and this self-consciousness is a defining attribute that not only speaks to her awareness of her own “authorial” role, but also to her ability to contain and regulate her “self” and story.⁴⁴ Read in this light, as a narrator Jane is a unified consciousness, an agent with complete authority over her own production of self.

When considering the self-constituting role of *Jane Eyre*, however, criticism tends to draw from three not entirely consistent theoretical camps. Championing *Jane Eyre* as a “cult-text of feminism,” 1980s feminist readings, particularly those influenced by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, saw Jane developing “a complete female identity” through the equivalence of narrative control with female power.⁴⁵ Her confident

⁴³ I use the terms “speak” and “write” somewhat interchangeably here, despite the persuasive criticism of this tendency by Ivan Kreilkamp, because both terms encapsulate the functions of narrative. Throughout this essay I am interested in the relationship between the narrator’s “writing” and the character’s “speech.” Furthermore, Kreilkamp’s argument focuses on what he sees to be a necessary “disembodiment” of the writer for Brontë, whereas I am interested in the productive *embodiment* of these narrators, thus making what appear to me to be the overt associations between speech and writing key to the function of narrative. See Ivan Kreilkamp, “Unuttered: Withheld Speech and Female Authorship in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*,” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 32 no.3 (1999): 331-354.

⁴⁴ Booth distinguishes between “self-conscious narrators... aware of themselves as writers” and “narrators or observers who rarely if ever discuss their writing chores.” This distinction is therefore not necessarily one between first- and third-person narrators. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 155.

⁴⁵ Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts,” 244; Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 112. Feminist approaches thus recuperated *Jane Eyre* and its model of female authority from the criticism leveled against it upon its publication by Elizabeth Rigby in her 1848 review. Rigby

authorship is imagined as an *authority* to define the self.⁴⁶ More skeptical of the nature of the “power” afforded to the female voice, Nancy Armstrong claimed that female narrative authority – like female authority over domestic and moral life – in fact preserved and served the interests of a system that naturalized gender roles.⁴⁷ The feminist tradition as a whole, whether celebratory or skeptical, has been primarily interested in the processes and effects of female authorial authority in this novel. In Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s words, Brontë’s novel has the potential to be read as a “psychobiography of the militant female subject” (245), although for Spivak, to read the novel in this way – as a narrative of rights-bearing female individualism – means acknowledging that this very subject-production depends upon that same individuality

condemned the novel as creating “a mere heathen mind which is a law unto itself.” [Rigby, Elizabeth]. “*Vanity Fair* - and *Jane Eyre*,” *The Quarterly Review* 84 no.167 (1848): 173.

⁴⁶ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar initiated a feminist approach that celebrated female literary authority as an “essential process of self-definition” in the face of both a patriarchal tendency to define women and a traditional association of the creative act with a masculine production or begetting. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 17. As Ruth Robins points out, “one of the reasons that the novel has been so often discussed in feminist literary criticism and theory is that it appears to announce a possible female victory under the restrictive and related conditions of patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism.” Ruth Robins, *Literary Feminism* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 43.

⁴⁷ In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Armstrong argues that the novel did not so much empower women over men as naturalize and reinforce the disciplinary strategies that measured behavior according to preconceived cultural (and paternal) norms. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

In their introduction to *The Violence of Representation*, Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse claim that female authority is generally opposed to institutional, political, and economic domains of power, but it can produce a form of power that is potentially stronger, more subtle, and also more “violent”: that of words and representation. Armstrong and Tennenhouse read Jane as a “triumphant underdog”; “For this self to become fact, it first had to dominate the different modes of identity present in the novel, just as Jane had to overcome certain Others in order to be a heroine. To earn the status of narrator, she must overcome Blanche, Mrs. Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, virtually everyone and anyone who stands in her way. This is the violence of the productive hypothesis: the violence of representation.” “Representing Violence, or ‘How the West Was Won,’” *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*, ed. Nancy Armstrong & Leonard Tennenhouse (Routledge, 1989): 4; 8.

being denied to Bertha Mason.⁴⁸ Individuality and authority have long been the focus of a feminist draw to this text, particularly because Jane's power of narrative appears, as Lisa Sternlieb has argued, to compensate for the perennial problem of the traditionally heterosexual happy ending.⁴⁹

A second theoretical branch, often closely associated with the first, picks up on Foucault's work on discipline to stress the self-policing and self-control inherent in Jane's narrative. But for some such critics, *Jane Eyre* is complicit in an overt regulation of female behavior that is antithetical to the positive model of female authority championed by the likes of Gilbert and Gubar and Sternlieb.⁵⁰ A third strain of criticism similarly reads Jane's authorial control over her story and her self as a form of discipline,

⁴⁸ Spivak argues that we must be careful not to read this novel as *merely* the "psychobiography of the militant female subject," since Jane's very status as an individual (and as such, the feminism inherent in this novel) is dependent upon the violence of imperialism, the madness and death of Bertha Mason. An approach purely focused on Jane's subjectivity, she argues, ignores the degree to which individuals are produced within and by an imperialist framework. Reading Brontë alongside Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Spivak argues that "[Bertha] must play out her role, act out the transformation of her 'self' into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction." Spivak, "Three Women's Texts," 251.

⁴⁹ Lisa Sternlieb reads Jane's "carefully constructed narrative strategy" as a tool of power; she can "take... revenge" on Rochester and also manipulate her reader "through the written word." Lisa Sternlieb "Hazarding," 454; 464.

For an insightful critique of the tendency to read narrative authority as a binary opposite to, and a way of overcoming, the heterosexual desire plot in Brontë's fiction, see Elizabeth Preston's article on the same issue in *Villette*. Preston argues that "Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Karen Lawrence, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, and Brenda S. Silver all share a methodology that locates two distinct narrative tracks – that of story-events (progression toward heterosexual union) and that of discourse events (progression toward narrative authority) – and then places them in a binary opposition, privileging the track that might subvert patriarchal power (authority) over the one that could reaffirm traditional power structures (union)." An alternative reading, according to Preston, is one that acknowledges the way the narrator comes to voice her desire. "Relational Reconsiderations: Reliability, Heterosexuality, and Narrative Authority in *Villette*," *Style* 30 no.3 (1996): 387.

⁵⁰ Bette London, for instance, argues that this novel regulates female behavior in a similar way to conduct books of the period. The narrator's role, she argues, is to "document and produce the docile body approved for Victorian womanhood," thus constructing a female subject "engendered through the disciplinary gaze." "The Pleasures of Submission: *Jane Eyre* and the Production of the Text." *ELH* 58 no.1 (1991): 199, 200.

but taking a cue from Freudian psychoanalysis, and often drawing parallels between Jane's passionate self and Bertha Mason as an embodiment of her subconscious desires, this approach emphasizes Jane's need to impose order on those elements of her split self that threaten to overwhelm her conscious control.⁵¹ Even critics who are interested in a more historical approach, such as Sally Shuttleworth, tend to align self-control with unruly desires. Elaine Showalter writes that "[a]t a linguistic level, the narrative of *Jane Eyre* enacts the novel's central thematic: order and structure are imposed on disruptive, inchoate material."⁵² What these three approaches share is the assumption that *control* is the operative thematic of *Jane Eyre's* narrative. Although ultimately I will argue against this position and its narrow approach to authority, I will first take up this critical baton in a way that examines the narrative's explicit gestures towards its strategic subject-production and world-making project. That is, in order to appreciate the way self-control operates in this novel, I will show that rather than reading *for* a feminist self-definition, a disciplinary engendering, or a careful excavation of repressed material, we need to understand subject-production in *Jane Eyre* as an aspect of its *narrative*, and as taking place in direct conversation with concerns about self-control central to nineteenth-century debates about the (ontological and phenomenological) construction of the person.

For Jane Eyre, in narrating her story, makes explicit her role as master world-maker. When she pauses at the beginning of chapter ten to draw our attention to the

⁵¹ Gilbert and Gubar, in their *Madwoman in the Attic*, focus on Bertha as Jane's "avatar" (359), her "dark double" (360), representing her rebellion against patriarchal constraints. Elaine Showalter also influenced the development of a psychoanalytic approach to the novel by associating the "red room" with Jane's interiority in overtly Freudian terms (69). Following in their path, a variety of analyses of *Jane Eyre* have relied upon psychoanalysis as a form of critical diagnosis.

⁵² Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, 152.

progress of her story (quoted in my epigraph), she emphasizes its structure – its chapter breaks, pace, teleology – and reminds us that she has a *strategy*, a plan or map of the whole story, which she will reveal to us in an appropriately-regulated manner. Reader, you are in good hands, she informs us; I am in control, and I know what I’m doing. Brontë’s own authorship is subsumed under and into Jane Eyre’s confident narrative voice. If we read Jane’s explicit authority over narrative and its structures within the theoretical framework I have outlined – one that aligns de Certeau’s concept of strategy with a unity approach to the mind as sovereign over the body – we start to see a common theme: a god-like visual access, agency, and power. Strategically detached from the world she oversees and produces, Jane repeatedly emphasizes the distance between her narrating self and her supposedly “former” identity as character. Such detachment of the novel’s world-making power from the world it makes exemplifies de Certeau’s definition of strategy. Illustrated most vividly in his description of the view of a city from above, de Certeau compares the effect of elevation on the viewer of a city to the totality of a map or grid of urban planning, in which a city is imagined as a readable whole: “[Elevation] transforms the bewitching world by which one was ‘possessed’ into a text that lies before one’s eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god.”⁵³ Jane’s narrative position is that of de Certeau’s elevated *place*, imagined both temporally and spatially, and Jane herself is transformed into that voyeuristic and strategically-positioned god or urban planner (despite her lack of an urban environment). As the quintessential “subject with will and power,” she is raised up above the detail of her story and flaunts her strategic position.⁵⁴ And like de Certeau’s

⁵³ De Certeau, *Practice*, 92.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

description of scientific writing, a primarily strategic form, Jane's narrative strategy "ceaselessly reduces time, that fugitive element, to the normality of an observable and readable system."⁵⁵ That is to say, the time, process, and detail of the story are made over into a trajectory that can be ordered and organized, compartmentalized into chapter and scene, made readable by a narrator who, as she demonstrates most overtly at the beginning of chapter ten, makes explicit her organizational skill, her ability to make decisions about what to "record," "give," and "pass... over."⁵⁶ These overt authoritative gestures involve a regulation of the structural elements of her story, but they are also closely associated with another type of regulation: that over the *self*.

In telling a story – and reminding us so frequently of that narrative act – the narrator of *Jane Eyre* does much more than recount plot details. She consistently steps outside of the descriptive details of narration to maintain the position and person of the narrating subject as a location of theoretical and analytic knowledge appropriate to the world it is mapping out for us. The all-encompassing vision of a first-person is established by the qualifying, abstracted *analytical* procedures which guide narrative accounts, consistently reinforcing the narrator's prerogative of establishing the totalizing norms of the world she narrates. These norms, it must be noted, are more than regulatory instructions on how to read the novel; they are norms that have effect in story-space, regulating Jane's own behavior as a character. The production of these norms evidences a self-discipline that is at the heart of the relationship between the "I" of character and the "I" of narrator in this story. A succinct example of this process

⁵⁵ Ibid., 89.

⁵⁶ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 149.

occurs as Jane narrates the thoughts of her younger self locked in the Red Room at Gateshead:

What a consternation of soul was mine that dreary afternoon! How all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet, in what darkness, what dense ignorance, was the mental battle thus fought! I could not answer the ceaseless inward question – *why* I thus suffered: now, at a distance of – I will not say how many years, I see it clearly.

I was a discord in Gateshead-hall: I was like nobody there... They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathize with one among them; a heterogeneous thing... I know, that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, and romping child... Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently. (73)

This passage follows a common narrative pattern in the Gateshead portion of the novel. Coming just after the character's inward exclamations of "Unjust! – unjust!" (72), the exclamatory sentences that begin this paragraph place the voice of the narrator closely in accord with the passionate feelings of her younger self, the character. In fact, we could productively read the beginning of this passage as an "insurrection" enacted at the level of narrative, since we have – to use Genette's term – an internally focalized account of the past through the implicit exclamatory phrases of the young Jane that seem to resist being calmed or tamed. What we see happening here begins to account for the difference, and the relationship, between the narrating-Jane and the character-Jane. The novel carefully dramatizes the evasions and excesses of youth – the tumultuous, passionate mind – in order to stage strategies of discipline and containment. These exclamatory phrases are quickly reauthorized by a contextual exclamation that explains Jane's mental turmoil and frustration by way of an ignorance she *once* had, but has "now" overcome. The "distance" between character and narrator, enacted by the interjected "now," becomes so vast, both in knowledge and in years, that its specific

measure cannot be provided. What this distance does provide is a set of strategic analytical procedures that can objectify and contain the character's excesses.

The narrative stages a "mental battle" that it has absolute authority to put into perspective. Like de Certeau's voyeur looking down at the grid of the city, Jane can "now, at [a] distance" analyze and explain what she has narrated specifically through the attainment of visual prowess: "now... I see it clearly."⁵⁷ What follows is a paragraph of analysis, in which the narrative voice detaches itself completely from the character's struggle to offer an assessment of "why I thus suffered." Jane's narrative strategy is thus an exaggerated form of self-restraint, self-containment, and self-discipline, exerted at a great distance through a narrative act of re-telling. The self-cultivation of the *bildungsroman* becomes a retrospective narrative exercise. This episode illustrates the extent to which the narrative of *Jane Eyre*, most especially in the first third of the novel, is concerned both with establishing the perspective, knowledge, and analytical prowess of Jane as narrator, and with organizing and regulating her self retrospectively. Self-regulation is frequently attained through the narrator's reminders that she is the source of the universal principles which structure Jane's behavior. She voices repeated truisms, for instance, about what "children," as a category, can know, think, feel, and do. Having recounted Jane's outburst to her aunt Reed, the narrator muses: "A child cannot quarrel with its elders, as I had done; cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play, as I had given mine; without experiencing afterwards the pang of remorse and the chill of

⁵⁷ Jane is indeed constantly longing for an expansive vision. Climbing up to the attic and looking down at the countryside, she wishes for better visual access: "I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen" (178). As Karen Chase points out, she achieves this "power of vision" by the end of the novel, especially in her role as narrator. *Eros & Psyche: The Representation of Personality in Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot* (New York: Methuen, 1984), 85-91.

reaction" (97). Jane's remorse, then, is narrated by way of a universal behavioral response. Offered first, before any account of Jane's personal feelings of guilt, this valuation has the effect of explaining Jane's reaction in advance, but also (de)limiting its possibilities. Within this world, children universally feel a certain way. Jane's experience is regulated and qualified by the pre-authorized *norm* of the abstracted child, a norm explicitly established by the narrator.

Jane Eyre's regulatory strategies extend beyond the character to all aspects of the novel's structure and ultimately to the reader who "must" read as she is told. From the very first line – "There was no possibility of taking a walk that day" (63) – the narrator sets limits and boundaries which affect both Jane and her reader. She exerts narrative control over what is and is not possible in the world she simultaneously constructs and narrates. From the notorious confessional "Reader, I married him" (552), to over 35 instances of direct address to the reader, Jane flaunts her strategic authorial role over us, too. These moments of direct address act as the narrator's *directions* about how to read. They range from instructions about how to picture a character ("Let the reader add, to complete the picture, refined features..." [108]) to attempts to pin down the reader's thoughts ("Much too, you will think, reader, to engender jealousy" [264]); from asides that determine the nature of her reader ("oh romantic reader" [179]) to the use of the reader as witness ("Now I never had, as the reader knows... given any formal promise" [519]); and from attempts to draw us into the present of the narrative ("Stay till he comes, reader" [363]) to lengthy visual instructions for reading, like the following opening to chapter eleven:

A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the George Inn at Millcote, with such large-figured papering on

the walls as inn rooms have: such a carpet, such furniture, such ornaments on the mantel-piece, such prints... All this is visible to you by the light of an oil-lamp hanging from the ceiling, and by that of an excellent fire, near which I sit in my cloak and bonnet... Reader, though I look comfortably accommodated, I am not very tranquil in mind. (160)

This scene epitomizes the world-making role of Brontë's narrative; it makes explicit the mechanics of the narrative and flaunts the narrator's strategic control over character, world, and reader. With this metaphorical gesture, the narrator demands that we read the world of the novel in a carefully managed, literally staged way; the scene will be framed for us, props are carefully positioned and illuminated, and the mechanisms of that illumination are even made explicit. The scene will not begin until she is ready. She bullies us, making it imperative ("you must fancy") that we view the world according to her demands. This is the strategic narrator at her best, making visible both her carefully-framed creation and her own world-making powers. And this strategy is also an assertion of the first-person subject – the narrating "I" – through an overt objectification of two other "persons": the reader and the character. The narrator instructs a second-person "you" to view the character, who, although described as an "I," is clearly rendered as a third-person in this scene. It is by mobilizing, externalizing, and most importantly disavowing the heterogeneous faculties and feelings of this other, material self that the first-person narrator produces herself as pure strategic consciousness rather than substance. *Jane Eyre* thus demonstrates the extreme consequence of dualist approaches to the self by detaching the "first-person" from all materiality. This unified, autonomous "I" is so transcendent that, as a strategist and disciplinary world-maker, she appears to require virtually no "substance" at all.

The narrator's strategies of containment extend into and arise within the story space itself as the narrator constructs scenes of "mental battle[s]" followed by self-

restraint, the story of its own development as a disciplinary “I” that can judge and speak. Although, according to the *bildungsroman* model, this narrating “I” appears to develop out of the heterogeneous self of character, and indeed tells the story of its own coming-to-strategy through the character’s self-disciplinary attempts to become “better regulated” and “a disciplined and subdued character” (150), the narrator’s very strategic maneuvers turn the tables on this developmental trajectory. Thus, I would offer a subtle but important adjustment to Shuttleworth’s argument that in this novel, “order and structure are imposed upon disruptive, inchoate material.”⁵⁸ Such an assertion presumes that the disruptive material precedes the imposition of order and structure. Conversely, the narrator’s control over the norms that dictate the character’s behavior in advance mean that the deployments of a heterogeneous prior “self” appear to be an *effect* of narrative strategy wielded by the *a priori* first-person narrator. “Order and structure” appear to produce the very “disruptive, inchoate material” over which they then carefully stage strategic restraint. This immaterial first-person self appears to be more and more like Abernethy’s “intelligent, discretionary, controlling power” – a sovereign strategic agency that is master of all other manifestations of the self, including processes of mind and body.

III. Lucy Snowe’s Tactics

If Brontë acknowledged in *Jane Eyre* the potential for a “heterogeneous thing” (73), a process-oriented material self in her construction of character, she did so within a carefully strategic, self-disciplinary framework in which the first-person narrative “I”

⁵⁸ Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, 152.

retains a stable and unified *a priori* identity in direct opposition to that character. Six years later, however, she would experiment with a different type of narration, one that would reverse the priority of the relationship between narrative strategy and tactics and, in so doing, accentuate the cognitive and affective heterogeneity of the “person” narrating. Since its initial publication, and throughout the history of its criticism, *Villette* has puzzled and even exasperated readers with what appears to be an aleatory, fragmented, unreliable narrative, full of starts and stops, gaps and inconsistencies.⁵⁹ Read after *Jane Eyre*, Lucy’s Snowe’s narrative appears to *lack* many of the strategic markers of a unified self with authority to narrate its story; indeed, Lucy’s consistent attempts to exert strategic control over elements of herself that seem determined to

⁵⁹ Contemporary reviews of *Villette* were struck by its formal similarities to *Jane Eyre*, but also by what they saw to be its poor plot and stark stylistic differences: What Eugène Forçade called its “abrupt transitions” and “wayward and broken” sentences; what one anonymous reviewer termed its “fragmentary” disclosures; what Anne Mozley called its “want of continuity”; what George Henry Lewes saw as its “astonishing power and passion”; and finally what Matthew Arnold identified as its “hunger, rebellion, and rage.” [Eugène Forçade] Review in *Revue des deux mondes* 1 (15 March 1853) in *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Miriam Allott (London: Routledge, 2003): 199; “Unsigned Review from The Athenaeum. 12 February 1853,” *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, 189; [Anne Mozley], “Unsigned Review in the Christian Remembrancer” (April 1853), *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, 204; George Henry Lewes, “‘Ruth’ and ‘Villette.’ Westminster Review. 1853,” *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, 210; Matthew Arnold, *Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 29.

More recent criticism has continued to note these very stylistic “incoherences and compromises, inconsistencies of dislocations” in the novel that call for our critical attention. Mary Jacobus, “The Buried Letter: Feminism and Romanticism in *Villette*,” *Women Writing and Writing about Women* (London; New York: Croom Helm; Barnes & Noble, 1979), 58. In order to account for these *strange* elements in its narrative form, critics have resorted most often to psychoanalytic explanations which stress Lucy’s “haunted self-estrangement” as it is rendered in the novel’s form (Jacobus 42). For Joseph Allen Boone, the emergence of “perverse narrative erotics” and “libidinal currents” in the narrative of *Villette* makes this a “covert fiction of sexuality” and therefore a “(proto)modernist fiction of interiority.” *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 33-34. Others have tried to make sense of Lucy’s aleatory narrative as a purposeful narrative “strategy” on her part; for instance, Patricia Johnson has traced a *strategic* “doubleness” in *Villette*’s narrative by which “Lucy oscillates between the two sides” – two “selves” – “and in this movement, in the gap between the two selves, she finds her own voice.” Patricia E. Johnson, “‘This Heretic Narrative’: The Strategy of the Split Narrative in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*,” *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 30 no.4 (1990): 622.

speak and act as if on their own usually fail. But instead of reading Lucy as an ineffectual Jane Eyre and approaching her narrative from the point of view of what it tries but fails to accomplish, I want to consider the narrator of *Villette* as an alternative model of identity formation.

If Jane Eyre essentially narrates herself out of her story, to an external position and place from which she has been strategically narrating all along, Lucy Snowe appears to narrate from within her own story. Instead of considering that narrative aleatory and disjointed, which would imply its failure to exercise the strategic control that produces a unified “person” (and thus require us to value that control as the inherent goal of fictional autobiography), I would argue that we can better understand *Villette*’s “first person” as exploratory and adaptive. Three key sections of the novel exemplify most clearly the tactical nature of Lucy’s narrative: her journey in search of a livelihood after Miss Marchmont’s death (chapters 5 to 7), her wanderings during the long vacation (chapter 15), and her opiate-induced excursion into Villette (chapter 38) – all scenes in which she wanders through city streets. This is an urban novel in which Lucy navigates her way through a range of pre-structured institutional spaces, from the schoolroom to the church, the city to the family. Epitomized in these three sections – but also present throughout the novel – the movement of Lucy’s body *and* Lucy’s narrative through its territory is opportunistic and adaptive, “wandering whither chance may lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment.”⁶⁰ In the vacation, she wanders in and beyond the city: “I sought the city-gates, and passed them, and then went wandering away far along chausées, through fields, beyond cemeteries... to lanes and little woods, and I know not

⁶⁰ Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (London: Penguin, 2004), 54. Subsequent references to this novel will be cited by page number in the text.

where. A goad thrust me on, a fever forbade me to rest" (174-75). Her urban wanderings during the festival scene are, in their opium-induced state, an exaggeration of the same exploratory features we find throughout the novel. As her narrative shifts in tense, interrupts itself with questions and answers, and follows trains of thought, her body also goes "straying at random" (506); "now a sight, and now a sound, called me aside, luring me down this alley and that" (501).

This is the very nature of tactics: "efficacious meanderings," "clever tricks," "isolated actions, blow by blow," exemplified in de Certeau's work by the tightrope walker who constantly renews and adapt his movements.⁶¹ This artist is a figure of incredible restriction if we think merely in terms of the tightrope as a path, with beginning and end implying the necessity to get from one to the other. But it is in the progression, in the middle, that tactics emerge. The tightrope walker's body must adapt to vibrations caused by a combination of his body's motion and the environment; missteps demand compensatory missteps. The tightrope, like Lucy's narrative, is not quite a straight line. The object is not merely to get to the other side; the tightrope walker is an artist who has us imagine a continually adaptive and even playful movement in an apparently hostile environment. His, like Lucy's, is a style or an art of tactical movement in which his body tells a story.

If we were to create something like a formal history of narrative tactics, we would need to look to the exploratory travel narrative or to the oriental tale. For it is in the open-ended unfolding of these narrative forms that we find a structural precursor to the type of tactical formal process that characterizes *Villette*. If strategy works according to a map or pre-authorized structural plan (of a territory or of a novel), tactics are the

⁶¹ De Certeau, *Practice*, xviii, xix, 37, 36.

exploratory flip-side essential both to maneuvering within the world represented by the map and to the map's very production. From the point of view of strategy – that is, from a strategic position *outside and above*, much like the place of panoptic vision – tactics appear as disorder and disorganization. This might explain the evident exasperation of some critics approaching *Villette* according to the common reading practice of privileging a traditional definition of narrative authority: the ability to strategically control and organize the telling of one's own story.⁶² But what appears from one perspective as disorder can more productively be read as an alternative form of order. If strategy is aligned with the imperative form of “order” enacted as a direction and over a whole territory, tactics work by an adaptive and exploratory form of ordering as a continual process.⁶³ In de Certeau's formulation, tactics have an “operational logic”: they

⁶² From its first publication, critics have found *Villette* exasperating because of what appears to resist or escape such control. Matthew Arnold wrote of the novel: “Why is *Villette* disagreeable? Because the writer's mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion, and rage, and therefore that is all she can, in fact put into her book.” Arnold, *Letters*, 29. Criticism prior to the 1980s often tended to explain the strangeness of the novel as its *flaws*; for instance in 1973 Charles Burkhardt wrote of “faults, such as mischievous use of narrative viewpoint, exaggerations and sermons, but they are only nubs or knots in the solid strong texture of the novel.” *Charlotte Brontë: A Psychosexual Study of her Novels* (London: Gollancz, 1973), 100. Although modern scholars have attempted to theorize rather than dismiss the narrative's aleatory and fragmented structure, in referring to Lucy's “trickery” and “lies” there is still a tendency to dismiss or overcome, for the sake of a hermeneutic model, the “mischievous” elements of the text. Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman*, 418; Jacobus, “The Buried Letter,” 43. This can lead to a division between what Pauline Nestor distinguishes as two approaches to the text: those who “read toward a kind of coherence” and those who “challenge the notion of the author as the transcendent source of meaning and any sense of the organic wholeness of the text.” Pauline Nestor, *Villette: Charlotte Brontë* (New York: St Martin's, 1992), 10. For examples of the former, see note 81. For an example of the latter, see Luann McCracken Fletcher, who argues that the novel “resists interpretation because any interpretation we give it, any identity we assign to Lucy, must be largely of our own manufacture.” “Manufactured Marvels, Heretic Narratives, and the Process of Interpretation in *Villette*,” *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 32 no.4 (1992): 724-25.

⁶³ Strategy and tactics to contribute slightly differently to the very concept of “order” as a noun. The Oxford English Dictionary defines order (n) as both “Sequence, disposition, or arrangement” (“order, n.” III) – that is, the state of being arranged in “sequence or succession” and the “course or method” of that arrangement (13.a) – and also as “The action or an act of ordering; regulation or direction” (IV). Tactics correspond to the former while strategy is concerned with the directive agency of the latter, which is closely related to the verb-form, “to order.”

are “‘indirect’ or ‘errant’ trajectories obeying their own logic.”⁶⁴ *Villette* shares with the style of exploration narratives and oriental tales a combination of purposiveness *and* rambling exploration, whereby elements of the story unfold tactically, often episodically, and the narrative appears to enter spaces that have not already been mapped out. Tactics have a trajectory, but they do not require (or conform to) a map. Although we are to understand that Lucy writes as an old woman “of a time gone by” (51), her narrative, unlike Jane’s, does not read as though its teleology has been leading up to its conclusion all along. Indeed, given its inconclusive final pages, Lucy never narrates her way *out* of story-space. Frequently shifting into the present tense, following trains of thought, and appearing to change its mind, *Villette*’s narrative writes “the feeling as at the time I felt it... the view of character as it appeared when discovered” (214); it is as if the narrative is still in the process of living this life, without a strategically mapped path to or from the end, which it cannot quite envision. Consequently, then, we must resist our own temptation to “map out” *Villette*’s narrative as a master-structure leading inevitably to stasis, and instead *read* Lucy’s narrative as it unfolds – read it, that is, as a process that moves opportunistically and continuously adapts as it progresses.

If *Jane Eyre* manifests the unitary view of the self, Lucy Snowe’s narrative produces a person as a collection of loosely organized cognitive functions and bodily processes, rooted in the relationship between the body and its environment. Lucy Snowe is not one but several selves. This is not only true of the various social roles she plays within the novel, but more primarily of her composition as a person.⁶⁵ As we shall

⁶⁴ De Certeau, *Practice*, xi; xviii

⁶⁵ Lucy plays most of the economic roles available to a woman outside marriage, as she notes in her reply to Ginevra Fanshawe’s question “Who *are* you, Miss Snowe?” (341): “I am a rising character: once an old lady’s companion, then a nursery-governess, now a school teacher” (342).

see, she is imagined through a mechanism that draws from associationist thought, as a relational person activated by interactions with others as part of a multiplicity. But she is also internally multiple. In *Villette*, Brontë activates physiological accounts of the self as composite and processural by way of a narrator who experiences herself not as a unitary mind, as the proponents of a first-person approach to the study of mind maintained, but as a product of various forms of cognition and physically-rendered faculties that compete for supremacy.⁶⁶ Lucy's narrative is characterized by extended conversations between elements of her self, each embodied as a "faculty" (including Imagination, Reason, Memory, Hope, Fear, Inclination, Ability, Self-respect, Creative Impulse), each with a voice, active agency, and an identity separate from her own. Through the narrative staging of internal dialogue, Lucy both dissociates her "self" from her faculties' actions upon her *and* recognizes their presence within her. "I served two masters," she comments of one night during which Feeling and Reason compel her to write two separate letters to Dr. John, one a passionate outpouring of affection and the other a "curt missive" (281, 282). Although she externalizes their agencies, Lucy recognizes that each of these faculties has material roots in her own body, since almost every manifestation of a faculty's action has physical effect, from the touch of a cold hand or icy lips to a violent attack on her heart (282; 255). Just as Lucy describes the actress Vashti as "only a woman" in appearance, but internally driven by "seven

⁶⁶ Lucy's identity as a multiple self often makes her susceptible to readings that explain her identity psychoanalytically or render her mentally disturbed. For readings of *Villette* in the context of psychological disturbance, see chapter 10 of Shuttleworth, 219-242 and, to a lesser extent, Tony Tanner, "Substance and Shadow: Reading Reality in *Villette*," *New Casebooks: Villette*, ed. Pauline Nestor (New York: St Martin's, 1992), 58-67. Although Shuttleworth's work has productively read Brontë's novels in light of nineteenth-century psychology, I would argue that reading her "person" through mental disorder can detract from the productive ways in which she is created as a complex and compound subject rather than as an abnormal case study.

devils... which cried sore and rent the tenement they haunted" and "bore her through the tragedy" (286), Lucy herself is driven internally by a range of faculties and cognitive processes activated at different times. *Villette* dramatizes in narrative form phrenology's individually desiring faculties, each acting *in* and *on* the body of the person they produce.

Lucy is like a "tenement... haunted" by the multiple cognitive processes and affective impulses in her body, and at times she appears to be a passive and static entity in the face of these alternative forms of agency. She is described as a "cypher" (395), an "inoffensive shadow" (351), and as a mere "looker on" (143). We must be careful not to take these labels as definitive, however, since they speak to a type of self-regulation that is successful only to the extent that it produces a *public* persona, an external façade that is "better regulated, more equable, quieter *on the surface*; and it is the surface only that the common gaze will fall" (200, emphasis mine). The narrative produces Lucy as a composite site of active faculties that are more than a match for the "surface" self, the docile, even inert "I" that confesses its relative helplessness before these "mutinous" and "rebellious" inner impulses (121). Lucy repeatedly imagines this passive "I" as a public persona by describing it as a third-person defined in opposition to those features that characterize her subjective (or first-person) experience of herself: "I, Lucy Snowe, was calm," she insists (25); "that turmoil subsided: next day I was again Lucy Snowe" (132); "I, Lucy Snowe, plead guiltless of that curse, an overheated and discursive imagination" (15). Rendering this "I" as a third-person "Lucy Snowe," Brontë produces an external manifestation of a "calm" and "docile" person who, like a strategic map or system, appears static *from the outside*. This public Lucy – the "type" that she appears to others in a world full of gazes – is a static manifestation of the kind she will criticize by

juxtaposing Vashti to the inert Cleopatra.⁶⁷ Vashti, like the Lucy we experience through her narrative, is a person whose characteristics are precisely the reverse of this docility. In other words, the public “I” is associated with a stable, unified self, and, consequently, is juxtaposed against the first-person produced by narrative; the narrator experiences and creates herself in very “discursive” ways as the product of various deployments of cognitive and affective impulses.

Indeed, Lucy is a product rather than a manager of the individual faculties that, at different times, assume agency over her actions. Her first-person “I” is rendered not as a seat of some autonomous essential self or even a central intelligence strategically managing the deployments of its arsenal of faculties, but rather as a tactical process of turning over all agency of self to the faculty that can best operate within a given situation. In assuming Lucy’s agency, that faculty also assumes her identity; it takes over the properties of selfhood by acting responsively as the situation demands. For instance, upon her arrival in London, Lucy allows the faculty of “Common-sense” to deal with a situation in which she finds herself “obliged” “to act,” but “unfurnished with either experience or advice to tell me how to act”:

Into the hands of Common-sense I confided the matter. Common-sense, however, was as chilled and bewildered as all my other faculties, and it was only under the spur of an inexorable necessity that she

⁶⁷ Brontë appears to refer to materialism in the negative when comparing Vashti and Cleopatra: “Where was the artist of the Cleopatra? Let him come and sit down and study this different vision. Let him see here the mighty brawn, the muscle, the abounding blood, the full-fed flesh he worshipped: let all the materialists draw nigh and look on” (286-87). However, as Shuttleworth explains, Brontë does not here reject the relationship between mind and body, or even the primacy of body in Vashti’s performativity: Lucy’s “rejection of medical and artistic materialism stems rather from the rigid and incomplete nature of their conception; she objects less to the idea of an interrelationship between body and mind, than to their rather partial vision of this union.” Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, 239. Brontë’s objection to materialism here is specifically an objection to the artist’s creation of a “type” that reduces “Cleopatra” to merely *static* flesh rather than mobile and process-oriented embodiment.

spasmodically executed her trust. Thus urged, she paid the porter: considering the crisis, I did not blame her too much that she was hugely cheated; she asked the waiter for a room; she timorously called for the chambermaid. (51)

In this scene, as throughout the novel, Lucy's "I" is both separate from her faculties and merely another cognitive element. Without a structured and strategic knowledge of "how to act," she allows "Common sense" – which is here embodied (it is "chilled and bewildered" and, like an animal "spur[ed]," it "spasmodically" performs physical actions) – to negotiate the situation. Lucy names "Common-sense" the part of her physical self which is able to adapt to its world. Because "Common-sense" acts as the vehicle for her agency and action, this faculty literally becomes Lucy; throughout the novel other combinations of cognitive and affective processes similarly become the driving agent of this person, Lucy Snowe, completely destabilizing any basis for identity in a unified and autonomous mind.

A product of the physiological drives that are rendered external to consciousness (and thus given third-person identities like Common-sense) but internal to the body, Lucy is an aggregate self, what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a "pack."⁶⁸ Her internal faculties converse between and respond to one another, rendering her a responsive system rather than a unified and homogeneous entity. This "pack" nature is not limited to an internal heterogeneity; Lucy is also imagined as part of an assemblage that extends beyond what we might understand as her "individual" self. Lucy does not distinguish between her internal affects and her susceptibility to and inseparability from the world around her. Read as Brontë's experiment with physiological and

⁶⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "1914: One or Several Wolves?" *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 26-38.

associationist models of identity and their interest in the body's material interaction with its milieu, Lucy's passivity becomes *receptivity*.

To pursue this line of thought, we need only assume that Lucy does not exist as a "person" prior to the experience that produces her. Ever-responsive to her physical environment, Lucy is activated by the world around her. Living with Miss Marchmont, she finds her mental space inseparable from her surroundings: "All within me became narrowed to my lot" (42). After her employer's death she has difficulty separating herself from those surroundings and requires a new milieu in which to begin living again: "It seemed I must be stimulated into action. I must be goaded, driven, stung, forced to energy" (42). With no innate selfhood, Lucy is *produced* by the influence of her environment and situation: "I know not that I was of a self-reliant or active nature; but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances" (40). This exposes the dependency of Locke's inner world of the mind on the body's existence in the world of sense, and the novel makes clear that the person is only activated as such through a relationship with its environmental stimuli.⁶⁹ Indeed, during her vacation period, in the face of "seven weeks as bare as seven sheets of blank paper" (a Lockean metaphor of mind), Lucy's lack of stimulation renders her blank: she loses both consciousness and the thread of her narrative, ceasing momentarily to be a person or a narrator – a predicament that yet again attests to the inseparability of the two.

Lucy's adaptive nature is an associationist process of the body's relationship with its *milieu*, a concept which, according to Georges Canguilhem, underwent a shift in

⁶⁹ We might think of Lucy's dependence on sensory stimuli for her very existence as a subject as akin to Giorgio Agamben's example of the tick in *The Open*. The tick is inseparable from its relationship with the elements in its environment – the warm blood of its host – that allow it to be a tick: "The tick is this relationship; she lives only in it and for it." Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 47.

the nineteenth century from a purely mechanistic medium for the interaction of two pre-existing entities to that which infuses and determines formational interactions. Lucy performs the very adaptive movements that Canguilhem notes became integral to the identity of living beings in this period: "Adaptation is a repeated effort on the part of life to 'stick' to an indifferent milieu. Adaptation as the result of an effort is therefore neither harmonious nor providential."⁷⁰ Transported from one environment to another, Lucy consistently has to adapt in ways that are tactical rather than "providential" in an attempt to "stick" to a series of milieus that appear to be "indifferent" but upon which she depends for her very progression and personhood. This adaptation is importantly a physiological process initiated by the body rather than a product of the mind's deliberation. Wandering through lonely countryside in the dark shortly after Miss Marchmont's death, Lucy "trace[s]" a "dim path" "by the leading of stars" and the Aurora Borealis. What follows offers a concise account of her stimulative mechanism: "this solemn stranger influenced me otherwise than through my fears. Some new power it seemed to bring. I drew in energy with the keen, low breeze that blew on its path. A bold thought was sent to my mind; my mind was made strong to receive it" (49). The "moving mystery" in the sky does not directly impact Lucy's mind through thought, but first brings a physical "energy" into her body along with the night air. This energy transfers *from body to mind*, which receives the "bold thought" from the outside ("was sent to my mind"). In the final step, Lucy again describes her mind in passive phrasing, as a receptacle altered by some active force connected to the thought that has entered into it ("my mind was made strong"). Completely reversing the mind-body sequence

⁷⁰ Georges Canguilhem, "The Living and Its Milieu," trans. John Savage. *Grey Room* 3 (2001): 12. Canguilhem dates this shift from Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's *Philosophie Zoologique* in 1809.

and hierarchy of traditional unity approaches whereby the mind is the origin of all action, Brontë makes Lucy's mind the vessel and adaptive *product* of a body that has been acted upon by "energy" in its environment. From this associationist model of the self as an always-developing process, we can begin to understand why the self-disciplinary mechanisms at the heart of *Jane Eyre's* narrative strategy are not operative in *Villette*.

Lucy recognizes the presence of something physical inside her that will not be submitted to a set of externally-regulated or self-imposed norms. This material, animal element can be appeased, but not disciplined; it is a "being I was always lulling" (121). This "tiger crouched in a jungle" is always only sleeping, always potentially ready to pounce: "The breathing of that beast of prey was in my ear always; his fierce heart panted close against mine; he never stirred in his lair but I felt him" (67). Similarly, despite Lucy's desire to "knock on the head" her "longing," her metaphor of Jael driving a nail through the temple of her internal Sisera is altered so that Sisera does not die but is "but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench; then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core" (121). In a series of animal images, always associated with parts of Lucy's body (here with her brain and elsewhere with her ear and heart [see 132; 255; 258; 282]), Lucy experiences herself in the same way that she describes Vashti: "what hurts becomes immediately embodied" (287). With the employment of this animal element to describe Lucy's internal state, Brontë mobilizes a common metaphor for mind-body dualism: the body as an animal element ruled over by an independent (and human) mind. However, she upturns this image by rendering the internal animal principle impervious to external rule or discipline, and also by making it the very source of Lucy's *mental* battles, her emotional state. We

misread this animal imagery if we focus only on Lucy's narrative of her attempts to tame and lull the beast inside her, for the emphasis is always on the resilient tactical agency of this internal being, which is both a physical being and *process* of being.⁷¹

Distributing all of Lucy's interiority and agency, both mental and physical, amongst embodied and willful parts, Brontë reverses and collapses the conceptual paradigm used to think about a unitary mind as opposed to the body, and instead renders Lucy an assemblage of affective agencies. Lucy imagines her mental faculties such as Reason and Imagination (which were traditionally, under a unity model, imagined as internal manifestations of mind) as having external, third-person agency over her (she can talk to them), whereas she imagines a series of physical beings (which would be traditionally external to the mind) as living within her. These multiple physical beings that Lucy imagines both inside and outside are inseparable from her very self: Lucy *is* her animalistic impulses and feelings, her willful faculties, and her adaptive reactions to external impulses. In producing a person who expresses the very approaches to the self at the heart of both physiological and associationist psychology, Brontë produces a model of *affect* whereby Lucy's emotions arise out of her body and its interactions with the world rather than from an externally-positioned mind.

⁷¹ Many readings of *Villette* fold these efforts at self-control into the novel's prevalent metaphors of surveillance. Building on the work of D. A. Miller in *The Novel and the Police*, work by Margaret Shaw on the techniques of observational control, as well as Shuttleworth's reading of *Villette* in her final chapter ("The Surveillance of a Sleepless Eye") are interested in the pervasive tropes of discipline as visual surveillance in this novel. Indeed, as Joseph Allen Boone shows us, *Villette* offers perhaps the most succinct case-study of Miller's Foucauldian reading in practice, although having demonstrated how this novel can be read through the Foucauldian paradigm of discipline, he then departs from that argument by "revealing the incompleteness of this paradigm by mapping the complexities of Lucy's psychic disguises, textual strategies, and covert desires onto it." Boone, *Libidinal Currents*, 34-35. That is, Boone attempts to recuperate Lucy's psyche from the disciplinary structures of the novel, but he does so with a psychoanalytic framework.

Psychoanalytic criticism has us read Lucy Snowe's multiplicities as always attributable to an eruption of a single repressed desire. Perhaps too accustomed to Jane Eyre's first person, critics generally insist upon Lucy's authority, however indirect and even devious, as a realization of self through the controlled emergence and resolution of repressed material that has been hidden beneath her "snowy" exterior.⁷² In particular, it has become a critical commonplace following Gilbert and Gubar's reading to reduce aspects of Lucy's milieu, most particularly the other people with whom she interacts (especially the female figures: Ginevra, Polly, Vashti, the nun), to manifestations of

⁷² For a psychoanalytic approach to *Villette* interested in the relationship between the psyche and the progress towards self-authorship, see Helene Moglen's biographical study, *Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived* (New York: Norton, 1976). Also see Charles Burkhart, *Charlotte Brontë: A Psychosexual Study*. For a more nuanced psychoanalytic reading of *Villette* as a proto-modernist text, see Joseph Boone, *Libidinal Currents*.

The impulse to find a structure to what appears to many critics as a lack of a coherent subject in *Villette* has produced many readings of Lucy Snowe as a split subject. Readings that stress a dual or divided nature have included Nina Auerbach, "*Villette: The Divided Self*," *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987): 204-11; Patricia E. Johnson, "This Heretic Narrative"; Christina Crosby, "Charlotte Brontë's Haunted Text," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 24 no.4 (1984): 701-715; and Margot Peters, *Charlotte Brontë: Style in the Novel* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973).

Although I would agree that we can find a public persona in *Villette* that contrasts with her interior experience of herself, I want to resist the urge to reduce this production of difference in the novel to a dualism. This is primarily because such arguments tend to reduce the interior self to a single, unitary formulation, whereas I want to stress her proliferating multiplicity. Furthermore, Lucy's passive and inert "I," her public persona, can more productively be read as one of assemblage of cognitive elements in Lucy's formation as a person.

Even readings that are not explicitly psychoanalytic in theoretical approach tend to gesture towards such critical diagnosis, reading her narrative as revealing what is hidden. Brenda Silver, for instance, argues that Lucy's descriptions of herself as passive conceal a truly active power in a world that denies that power to women. Lucy, she claims, maintains a "power of the weak"; she "must conceal in her discourse her supposedly masculine 'ambitious wishes' as well as her erotic desires." Silver, "The Reflecting Reader," 100. Karen Chase, in her insightful reading of *Villette* alongside *Jane Eyre*, confronts this very problem of psychoanalytic readings: "Lucy Snowe is as repressed as you please; only this diagnosis must not obliterate the actual workings of the novel." Chase, *Eros & Psyche*, 67. Chase attempts to understand the mechanism and effect of Lucy's passivity, recognizing that she requires the "action of others" to produce her movements (69).

Lucy's unconscious.⁷³ Everything can be explained by a common denominator: Lucy's desire. These limitations of a psychoanalytic approach are precisely the criticisms leveled by Deleuze and Guattari at Freud's reduction of the Wolf-man's dream of several wolves to one paternal figure. Freud, they argue, "mistook crowds for a single person"; he reduced all multiplicity – the pack of wolves – to individuality: one wolf, the father.⁷⁴ Although *Villette* clearly calls for a reading that addresses interiority and subjective experience, psychoanalysis "flattens everything, masses and packs"; it reduces the complexity of Lucy's narrative and person to a production of her individuality, her strategic authority over self and story.⁷⁵ Nineteenth-century psychology – particularly physiological and associationist schools of thought – provides a model far more appropriate to Brontë's development of a person than we find in later, Freudian psychology.

Like the Wolf-man, Lucy is a pack, internally multiple and externally relational. It is in her relations with other people – not as unconscious projections of herself but as other interdependent selves – that she becomes a person. Lucy's milieu is both a physical environment and what Canguilhem refers to as a newly-developing "biogeographical milieu," reformulated by Charles Darwin in the mid-nineteenth century as an adaptive "relationship between living thing and other living things."⁷⁶ Lucy adapts and is developed by physical reactions to other characters, particularly M. Paul, whose sneers are a "strong stimulus" – they "warmed the blood in my veins, and

⁷³ Mary Jacobus, for instance, sees "Mrs Bretton, Mme Beck, Ginevra, the detestable Zélie of St Pierre and the adorable Paulina" as "projection[s]" and "facets of the consciousness whose passions animate them." Jacobus, "The Buried Letter," 50.

⁷⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, "One or Many," 30.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁶ Canguilhem, "The Living and its Milieu," 14; 13.

sent added action to my pulses" (390).⁷⁷ This adaptive relationality is an essential element of the tactical self that emerges in *Villette*. It requires us to extend what is somewhat underdeveloped in de Certeau's model of tactics: even though de Certeau recognizes that the pedestrian is "an element signed by many others," his metaphor is primarily one of *the* pedestrian.⁷⁸ However, this walker does not navigate the streets alone; he is surrounded by other pedestrians whose movements must affect his own. Physiological and associationist approaches to the person intersect in the mechanism of *affect*, which encompasses the intra- and inter-personal aspects of Lucy's multiplicity.⁷⁹ "Affect" supplies what is missing in de Certeau's tactical model in offering a way to understand the vital importance of the body in the pedestrian or tightrope-walker's movements, as well as how that body is part of, and adapts to, a complex of interrelated bodies. Unlike emotion, which tends to be associated with a separate and unified mind, affect arises from the brain and bodily drives (it is physiological), and it is interpersonal and associative, located "in the midst of things and relations."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ For more on M. Paul's formative influence on Lucy, see Chase, *Eros & Psyche*, 70.

⁷⁸ De Certeau, *Practice*, 93.

⁷⁹ Two essays published in 1995 marked a new wave of affect theory: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold" and Brian Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect." These authors developed the foundational work of Silvan Tompkins (*Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 1962-1991) and Gilles Deleuze on Spinoza. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg give a succinct conceptual overview of the primary "regions of investigation" into affect theory since the mid-90s in their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), which also includes essays by some of the leading affect theorists, including Sara Ahmed, Massumi, Lauren Berlant, Patricia Clough, Melissa Gregg, and Lawrence Grossberg. *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). For other recent studies of affect see Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) and *Affect and Artificial Intelligence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

⁸⁰ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg "An Inventory of Shimmers," *The Affect Theory Reader*, 1-25; 6. These are, in effect, two strands of affect theory, the first (coming out of the work of Silvan Tompkins) stressing the evolutionary aspect of affect as psychobiology, and the second (associated with the work of Deleuze via Spinoza), imagining affect as located among people, in

In arguing that the tactical model of the person, as both an affective being and a being stimulated by affect, is produced through *narrative*, I am challenging the prevailing critical view that Lucy's narrative signals precisely the reverse, a person who is stringently strategic, controlling, and profoundly manipulative. As evidence for such a view, critics have quickly pointed to what is termed Lucy's unreliability as a narrator, her "trickery" and her "lies" and "deliberate ruses," exemplified by what is read as a narrative decision to withhold knowledge that Graham Bretton and Dr. John are one and the same.⁸¹ The fact that we are not "let in" on this "secret" until six chapters later is read as Lucy's most *strategic* act as narrator; as Nancy Rabinowitz claims, "When games are played with what is told us... we are much more conscious of the medium of the tale, and consequently of the authority of the teller. Brontë can underline the assertion

the affects that other bodies produce on us. Both strands of affect theory, and the range of scholarship that they have produced, lend themselves to (and indeed arise out of) a dominant poststructuralist desire to undermine the idea of self as separate, coherent, and autonomous. Teresa Brennan argues that the transmission of affect between people was "once common knowledge" but "faded from the history of scientific explanation as the individual... came to the fore." For Brennan, then, the recognition of affect is inversely related to a society's valuation of atomic individuality. The ability of affect to be transmitted proves, argues Brennan, that "[t]here is no secure distinction between the 'individual' and the 'environment.'" Teresa Brennan, *Transmission*, 2; 6.

⁸¹ Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 418; Jacobus, "The Buried Letter," 43. We can see a succinct summation of this approach in Andrea O'Reilly Herrera's argument that *Villette* is: shot through with strategic omissions, silences, and concealment. Lucy repeatedly withholds from the reader important information, such as the identity of Dr. John, thus establishing and maintaining her authorial control over her own narrative and over her audience. In effect, she presents for the reader's scrutiny only selective incidents in her life and thereby maintains some control over the way she is represented. "Imagining a Self between a Husband or a Wall: Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*," in *The Foreign Woman in British Literature: Exotics, Aliens, and Outsiders*, ed. Marilyn Button & Toni Reed (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999); 69.

This approach is a familiar and pervasive one which draws upon Gilbert and Gubar's argument that "Lucy's evasions as a narrator indicate how far she (and all women) have come from silent submission and also how far all must yet go in finding a voice. In struggling against the confining forms she inherits, Lucy is truly involved in a mythic undertaking – an attempt to create an adequate fiction of her own." Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 419.

of that power by having her narrator deceive and undeceive us."⁸² Rabinowitz joins what has become a critical consensus that champions a definition of authority developed out of Gilbert and Gubar's feminist tradition as a *power* or control over both self and story in which authorship is equated with autonomy, self-knowledge, and, most importantly, self-definition.⁸³ Although Elizabeth Preston and Karen Chase have opened up possibilities for reading against such accounts of Lucy's autonomy, neither push beyond the framework of her strategic narrative agency.⁸⁴ Most readings of *Villette*

⁸² Rabinowitz, "Faithful Narrator," 248.

⁸³ We have seen this critical approach prevalent in readings of *Jane Eyre* (see page 54). For examples of such critical readings of *Villette*, see especially Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz; Patricia E. Johnson; Susan Lanser; Brenda Silver; and Karen Lawrence, "The Cypher: Disclosure and Reticence in *Villette*," in *Tradition and the Talents of Women*, 87-101 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

Silver, for instance, writes of Lucy's "struggle to take control of her narrative" "The Reflecting Reader," 101. Johnson sees this struggle epitomized in her need to write two letters to Dr. John, which is "an emblem of Lucy's entire narrative, of her attempt to be the author of herself." "This Heretic Narrative," 618. Sally Shuttleworth also makes a similar argument that, "In... trying to render herself illegible, Lucy attempts to assume control over the processes of her own self-definition." Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë*, 242. Susan Lanser's is perhaps the most celebratory account of Jane's authority: "Jane's voice is an extraordinarily defiant fiction of authority." *Fictions of Authority*, 185.

⁸⁴ Preston offers a persuasive reevaluation of *Villette*'s ending in a way that refuses to read the progression towards narrative authority (discursive field) as an antidote for the heterosexual desire plot (story field). (See note 49.) Her reading is most insightful in its recognition that "*Villette* is process, not product," and in her call for a method of reading that uses new narratological tools: "a methodology that will allow us to understand better the production and reception of diverse feminisms." However, in fusing these two fields in a reading that traces the way Lucy comes to voice her desire, Preston does not challenge the essentially strategic reading of Lucy's authority. Preston, "Relational," 403; 402.

Chase, in *Eros & Psyche*, sees both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* as staging development of "the individual placed among others... not so much an independent unit as a nodal point in a complex system" (83). That is, she treats both novels as interested in this interpersonal model of development. However, she qualifies this argument by arguing that Brontë stages this engagement with others in order to then produce a self as a spatial configuration that can assert itself through its expansive vision. "Attachment to others is necessary to keep the self from languishing," she writes of *Villette*, "but it is not final; it makes possible a further return to self and self-sufficiency" (83). The ending of both novels, Chase argues, allow the characters a self-defining power of expansive vision: "No longer confined, no longer exposed, the secure self can contemplate the possibilities spread before it" (90). Equating this power of the "eye" with that of the "I," Chase makes a critical move that is quite common in readings of Brontë's novels: she recognizes the tactical possibilities in the novel before returning to a strategic reading that privileges self-defining authority. This "return to self and self-sufficiency" that Chase marks in

consequently read the paralipses (gap) and resulting analepsis (filling in the omission) as a calculated trick played by a narrator whose unreliability is a function of pure control.⁸⁵ This, despite the fact that the novel asks us to see this key omission as a split decision made in the moment: “I might have cleared myself on the spot, but would not,” she tells us. In her “perverse mood of the mind,” she finds “I did not speak” (109). Where Jane Eyre’s omissions serve to remind us of her narrative authority above and beyond the story, Lucy’s narrative silences mirror her character’s silence. Jane states “I now pass a space of eight years almost in silence; a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection” (149), whereas Lucy passes over the same number of years with a shipwreck metaphor which suggests, but does not disclose, a crisis. Again, Lucy’s narrative ambiguity parallels her character’s silence: “I complained to no one about these troubles. Indeed, to whom could I complain?” (39). Lucy’s so-called unreliability frustrates our attempts to grasp a strategic teleology because it constitutes an opportunistic way of dealing with a situation.

While Lucy is undoubtedly aware of herself as first-person narrator of “this heretic narrative” (180), she does not emerge as a fully-realized person who exists prior to the narrative. The reader is asked to traverse the novel in time, in process, alongside the character. Lucy’s unreliability can thus be seen as tactical silence. The moment in which she recognizes Dr. John is notably a *gap* in itself, a loss or lack of consciousness,

both novels shuts down the possibilities for a different type of self that we can see most clearly in *Villette*.

⁸⁵ “Paralipsis” and “analepsis” are Genette’s terms. A paralipsis is a “type of gap” created “by the omission of one of the constituent elements of a situation in a period that the narrative does generally cover.” This gap can be later filled in by an analepsis, which in this case would be a homodiegetic, completing analepsis (an internal analepsis that deals with the same line of action as the narrative and fills in an earlier paralipsis). Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 51-52.

one that is then mirrored by the extended narrative paralipsis: “the force of surprise, and also of conviction, made me forget myself – and I only recovered wonted consciousness when I saw that his notice was arrested” (108). The em-dash that stands in place of an explanation is also a gap in consciousness, a forgetting that is mirrored in the narrative. Lucy’s silence is an immediate and responsive tactic. She “reveals” the “truth” to us in the time and place at which, as a character, she finds she must acknowledge and speak Graham’s name. Tactically, Lucy Snowe is a person produced through narrative rather than a person producing narrative. Consequently, her novel, by mobilizing physiological and associative approaches to the person, makes possible an alternative model of narrative *author-ity*.

IV. The Dancer and the Archivist

By reading *Villette* as producing an adaptive and heterogeneous person, I have used *Jane Eyre* as strategic foil and have set up Lucy Snowe as the counterpoint to the person produced in that novel. But to leave it at that would be to tell only half the story. New ways of thinking cannot emerge from nowhere. In reading *Villette* after *Jane Eyre* we can grasp the ways in which Brontë produces a new way of thinking about the subject; we can understand the importance of narrative in a larger cultural shift that begins to understand the person as a complex process of interactions with and ways of operating in a world. I want to conclude this chapter by returning to *Jane Eyre* in order to trace in that novel the emergence of this tactical way of approaching the person. In making this move, we must acknowledge the dependence of the narrative operations of person-making that we have called the strategic on the tactical. For these two narrative modes work concurrently; each builds upon *and* undermines the other. Indeed, in

emphasizing the tactical dimension of *Villette*, I have found it nearly impossible not to define that narrative mode in opposition to the strategic control it undermines. Lucy Snowe is what de Certeau refers to as “a dancer disguised as an archivist”: the tactical movements of her narrative are easily misread as a retrospective archival production of order and self-governance.⁸⁶ After all, these are the criteria of interest to a theoretical model concerned with bringing to light invisible disciplinary mechanisms. And if such readings are prevalent, it is because, as a dancer, Lucy operates in and is read as part of a world that values the archive.

That Brontë recognized the potential for an alternative narrative operation that could work within, in spite of, and sometimes against such strategic disciplinary structures is demonstrable in her own comments about *Villette*. In a letter to her publisher’s assistant William Smith Williams, Brontë claimed, “Unless I am mistaken the emotion of the book will be found to be kept throughout in tolerable subjection.”⁸⁷ This comment, in its equivocal and passive construction, appears to absolve Brontë of any authorial intention in the “subjection” of “emotion.” It is a comment that both gestures towards a strategic reading and undermines that gesture, for the juxtaposition of “tolerable” and “subjection” reveals two potential referents for the adjective. While “tolerable” could refer to the amount of *emotion*, the sentence makes more grammatical sense if it modifies the amount of *subjection* that can be tolerated. Subjection and toleration, corresponding to strategy and tactics, push against one another. As the noun that keeps emotion at bay, “subjection” may appear to have the upper hand over its attributive adjective, but in its modifying position “tolerable” appears to have its own

⁸⁶ De Certeau, *Practice*, 80.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Angus Easson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 415.

crucial influence. A strategic force that quells emotion, subjection (a term that can mean not only restraint or oppression but also a production of the subject) is met by a corresponding tactical element of toleration, a modifying process that is able to determine the amount of external subjection it is willing to accommodate.⁸⁸ Brontë's phrase epitomizes the way tactics and strategy become part of a single formulation, and exemplifies the clever potential of tactical modification and toleration in what we might too easily mistake for a unilateral strategic authority.

If we return to *Jane Eyre*, keeping in mind this interplay between strategy and tactics as dual narrative processes for producing the subject, we can begin to trace the emergence of what will, in *Villette*, become a new type of subject. The independent, authoritative, self-governing Jane Eyre is something of a dying breed; it is difficult to find, in novels after this, such a carefully strategic narrative authority that produces for us the stable person it never allows us to doubt was there all along. But, within the world produced by Jane-the-narrator, there are many Jane Eyres. The strategic elements of this novel are completely dependent upon the mobilization of an alternative, tactical model of the subject that is produced as character. We might say that the first-person narrative of *Jane Eyre* dramatizes the very paradox of "self-discipline," which is a discipline exerted both *over* the self and *by* the self, necessitating two contradictory definitions of the "person," one as heterogeneous physical object, and one as disciplinary subject detached from the body. These two versions of the person are interdependent in a way that illustrates the inseparability of strategy and tactics. For while the narrating "I" appears to actively mobilize this alternative, fragmented, unruly view of personhood in order to restrain and quell it according to a set of *a priori* norms,

⁸⁸ See Judith Butler on the relationship between subjection and the subject (see note 10).

at the same time this disciplinary, narrative “I” is only produced *through* the process of strategically regulating the character’s passions and impulses, and therefore appears to depend upon their existence. In *Jane Eyre*, then, Brontë may have been indebted to the unity approach to selfhood, but she was already interested in a complex and compound materiality of self. A “brain” in “tumult” and a “heart” in “insurrection” epitomize a body whose impulses have the potential to override the mind’s ability to view situations, determine causes, and regulate its responses (73); it is this potential for other versions of the self that I want to turn to here.

The capacity for an alternative, multiple subject is present by negation in even the most stringent feminist attempts to read *Jane Eyre*’s dominant authority as the production of a new female voice. In Susan Lanser’s description of the “tyrannical” and “defiant” nature of Jane’s “hegemon[ic]” authority, which she sees working by the “vanquish[ment of] the verbal authority of men,” she appears to acknowledge – however unintentionally – the possibility for that authority to be undermined.⁸⁹ That is, as with other feminist accounts of Jane’s authority, the focus is primarily on a *struggle* to attain that authority, a struggle against both male authority and the potential for an internal multiplicity. Lanser writes that Jane’s “energies are necessarily bent upon keeping others – perhaps especially her ‘dear Reader’ – from creating versions of her that might entrap her or threaten her representation of herself.”⁹⁰ It is in this emergence of other “versions” of Jane Eyre, however successfully submitted to strategic authority and disciplinary norms, that we find the tactical potential for an alternative, heterogeneous person that will be amplified in *Villette*.

⁸⁹ Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, 176; 185; 184.

⁹⁰ Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, 185.

In staging self-disciplinary narrative agency in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë opens up the possibility that much of the mind can be reduced to complex physiological process. As a character, Jane is ruled by passions, impulses, and warring faculties of mind. Her “mental battle” is rendered physically: her head contains pieces of “furniture” and “inmates,” and “all sorts of fancies bright and dark” are “tenant[s]” in her mind (191; 150; 181). Brontë dramatizes the potential in what had been so frustrating to David Drummond, Thomas Stone, and John Abernethy: phrenology’s reduction of the mind to a battleground. But at the same time she also provides an example of Abernethy’s “intelligent, discretionary, controlling power”: a self-disciplinary narrative “I” that cannot be reduced to these impulses or material components.⁹¹ Brontë pushes to the extreme a mind-over-body dualism that allocates to the *body* a whole range of faculties that unity philosophers considered part of an autonomous mind. The self in need of discipline includes such higher faculties of mind as reason, conscience, and memory, which themselves become embodied (conscience, for example, is an “arm of iron” that takes passion by the “throat” [387]). In *Jane Eyre*’s revision to the dualist model, the embodied self is ruled over by the disembodied, unified, disciplinary “I.” In attempting to restrain herself from her attraction to Rochester, the narrator turns what appears to be a conflict between passion and reason into a court battle between flawed and competing elements of the self:

Arraigned at my own bar, Memory having given her evidence of the hopes, wishes, sentiments I had been cherishing since last night – of the general state of mind in which I had indulged for nearly a fortnight past; Reason having come forward and told in her own quiet way, a plain, unvarnished tale, showing how I rejected the real, and rabidly devoured the ideal; -- I pronounced judgment to this effect: --

⁹¹ Abernethy, *Reflections*, 67.

That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life: that a more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on sweet lies, and swallowed poison as if it were nectar. (236-37)

Memory and Reason, faculties traditionally inherent to an incorporeal, unified mind and self, are here dissociated (and separated by the em-dash) from the all-powerful strategic “I,” with its independent juridical agency over the self and its dismissive refusal to even engage in the conversation (notably unlike Lucy’s “I,” which continually and ineffectually joins in the argument). The “I” is irreducible to any faculties of mind; it is indeed separate not only from the body of the “fool... Jane Eyre,” who is rendered as a (fragmented) third person, but also from the character’s mind.

Read from this tactical perspective, the “heterogeneous thing” (73) that is Jane’s character has much in common with Lucy Snowe. The difference lies in the presence of a unified “I” in *Jane Eyre*, maintaining the indivisibility and immateriality of mind advocated by the orthodox proponents of a unified self, a stable Ego located in a voice that can tell of itself. We might go so far as to suggest that this “I” in *Jane Eyre* is so separate from the embodied manifestations of character, so distinctly imagined as pure agency, that it risks not appearing to be a “person” at all. Indeed, in the passage above, the strategic “I” is made an *institution* rather than a person, “my own bar” at which her faculties are “arraigned.” When resisting her imprisonment in the red room, Jane describes herself as “a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself” (69). This comment aptly sums up the detached “I” in this novel as one that is not reducible to, or even directly associated with, any aspect of the self it narrates. Brontë dramatizes the complexities of Wordsworth’s “two consciousnesses” problem – the autobiographical narrating self and the “other Being” – by rendering that “other Being” an assemblage of

consciousnesses associated with a body.⁹² *Jane Eyre* exposes a potential problem with the strategic narrative “first-person” that *Villette* will address. That is, in so successfully promoting the unified mind as the location of self and self-production, it risks creating a narrating-person so detached from character and from a body that, as pure consciousness, she risks being so far above the text as to not be part of it. *Villette* will bring the narrator back down to earth and confront the idea that a person is an always-developing entity inseparable from a body and a milieu.

Jane Eyre concludes with the story of the character’s elevation to a place at which she is no longer subject to her milieu: the place from which she can narrate. This *bildungsroman* of a becoming-narrator fulfills the paradigm Genette lays out for autobiographical narration: “The narrator brings his hero’s story – his own story – precisely to the point when... [he] *is beginning to become* the narrator”; “The narrator’s last sentence is when – is *that* – the hero finally reaches his first.”⁹³ Three pages from her final sentence, Jane maps out her remaining project: “My tale draws to its close: one word respecting my experience of married life, and one brief glance at the fortunes of those whose names have most frequently recurred in this narrative, and I have done” (554). Her task: to tie up loose ends, to produce the enclosed world within which she will live and from which she can write. If *Jane Eyre* fills its pages with multiple manifestations of its character, each affected by and subject to its milieu, its conclusion fulfills Jane’s “long[ing] for a power of vision which might overpass th[e] limit” of her world (178). The final pages enact this elevation through the “power of vision” and of narration, through which she appropriates the world: “never did I weary of *gazing* on

⁹² Wordsworth, “The Prelude,” II.32-33.

⁹³ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 226; 227, emphasis original.

his behalf, and of *putting into words* the effect of field, tree, town, river, cloud, sunbeam – of the landscape before us” (554, emphasis mine). But if the end of *Jane Eyre* produces the very strategic vantage point, the “place that can be circumscribed as *proper*,” from which narration can take place, there is something of a rigidity and tension in a happy ending that requires the relative powerlessness, death, and disfigurement of all other characters (most especially Rochester).⁹⁴ If Jane is able to push beyond the determining factors of her milieu in order to bring the tale to the point at which the “first person” can, through acts of control and circumscription, begin to narrate, she produces a claustrophobic closed system; in making this “person” both the end-point and the beginning – both after and prior to – the narrative, the novel shuts down the tactical potential it had unearthed for alternative forms of personhood.

Where Jane rises above her world to craft a narrative place for herself, Lucy remains inside, still attached to, and a subject of, her milieu. In stressing Lucy’s inseparability from and interdependence with her surroundings, *Villette* makes Lucy “subject” to a (sometimes hostile) milieu, but notably not to strategic regulatory forces. For although Lucy reacts to her environment and to the affects of others, we must differentiate between the external *physical* stimuli to which she adapts and those *disciplinary* powers that she actively resists. Lucy’s tactical adaptability, then, is what Catherine Malabou has called a “plasticity” as opposed to mere “flexibility.” Where flexibility means being able to “receive a form or impression, to be able to fold oneself...

⁹⁴ De Certeau, *Practice*, xix. For more on the relationship between Jane’s narrative ascendancy and the suppression and violence her narrative does to other characters, see Armstrong and Tennenhouse, “Representing Violence.”

To be docile" it "lacks the resource of giving form, the power to create, to invent."⁹⁵ Plasticity, on the other hand, can both receive forms from its milieu and push back against certain constricting forms; a plastic person is "not only the creator and receiver of form but also an agency of disobedience to every constituted form, a refusal to submit to a model."⁹⁶ Plasticity has a tactical agency. Lucy refuses to submit to the forms imposed upon her by normalizing institutional forces, most notably the Catholic Church. She turns the tables on disciplinary surveillance, receiving a "secret glee" from her ability to watch and thereby evade Madame Beck's efforts to control her through knowledge (131). This is a novel of tactical adaptation to and plasticity in the face of a milieu. In not providing an extrication from that milieu, *Villette* reworks this adaptive personhood much more positively than its final pages might suggest, for it retains an openness and potentiality that is missing from *Jane Eyre*.

Villette's concluding chapter may be entitled "finis," but Lucy brings us to no such ending- (or beginning-) point. She ends instead with a breathless "pause: pause at once" that leaves undisclosed the fate of M. Paul and retains the potential for continuance.⁹⁷ If, instead of reading this conclusion as *lacking*, as Lucy's *inability* to "escape" into married life, we are able to see this narrative ending for its openness, we can better understand the possibility that *Villette* reveals in a narrative that does not close itself off as a complete system. For in the shift in emphasis between narrative

⁹⁵ Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* trans. Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 12.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6. Plasticity in Malabou's hands draws from the explosive potential of "plastique." Her work is specifically geared towards the plasticity of the brain.

⁹⁷ Brontë's inconclusive ending to *Villette* is another puzzling area of speculation for critics, some of whom read it as an extension of Lucy's manipulative authority, and some of whom resort to biographical detail: the ending was a compromise between her vision of M. Paul's death and her father's dislike of melancholy conclusions.

strategy and tactics that I have traced through these two novels, *Villette* marks a movement towards endings that are unwilling to provide the containment and closure that *Jane Eyre* inherited from predecessors like Jane Austen.⁹⁸ The second half of the nineteenth century saw novels that increasingly gestured towards a partially-disclosed, imagined, or uncertain future rather than tying up the loose ends of the past (Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*; Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*).⁹⁹ Novels increasingly end abruptly or not at all (George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*; Collins's *The Woman in White*; Dickens's *Bleak House*); finish in the middle of conversations (Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*; Collins's *No Name*); upturn the marriage plot (*Daniel Deronda*); or close with marriage plots that stress an uneasiness (Eliot's *Middlemarch*). Such inconclusive, incomplete, or unenclosed endings tend to highlight the interdependence of character and milieu or gesture towards an openness and continuance, towards the impossibility of *closure* or finality.¹⁰⁰ For if closure produces an "outside" to the world of the novel, the open-endedness of tactics keep us inside, traversing a narrative that repeatedly asks, re-asks, and attempts to

⁹⁸ Each of Austen's novels, with the exception of her final complete work *Persuasion*, ends with a similar tying-up of loose ends with the marriage plot and an enclosed, domesticated world. Only this last novel gestures towards some potential future turmoil with its reference to Captain Wentworth's occupation as a navy officer.

⁹⁹ *Hard Times* ends with a series of potential future events that Louisa may or may not foresee; *A Tale of Two Cities* closes with Sydney Carton's unuttered visions of the future; *Great Expectations* concludes with the equivocal vision of the future: "the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw the shadow of no parting from her." Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 442; and *The Moonstone* finishes with an epilogue in which the diamond promises a potential repetition events.

¹⁰⁰ Dorothea's marriage in *Middlemarch* sees her "absorbed into the life of another" and become "only known in certain circles as a wife and mother"; the novel ends with the narrative aside: "Certainly those determine acts of her life were not ideally beautiful... [T]here is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it." In Eliot's novels, the influence of a milieu has the potential to *overdetermine* the person. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 2000), 686; 688.

answer Lucy Snowe's question: "Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do?" (52).

If Charlotte Brontë's novels expose this interdependence of, and shift in emphasis between, strategy and tactics – between two different psychological models of the person produced through narrative – then her own authorship was also characterized by this paradigm. Brontë herself was not only aware of, but actively interested in, the relationship between these two authorial operations. In closing this chapter I turn to that other narrative agent, Brontë herself, to argue that her aesthetic was driven by the very interplay we have been tracing in her novels. Writing to W.S. Williams in 1848, Brontë stood up for her desire to produce something *new*: "Were I obliged to copy any former novelist, even the greatest, even Scott, in anything, I would not write – Unless I have something of my own to say, and a way of my own to say it in, I have no business to publish... [U]nless I have the courage to use the language of Truth in preference to the jargon of Conventionality, I ought to be silent."¹⁰¹ Claiming agency for her own authorial act, both in the content ("something of my own to say") and in the style ("a way of my own to say it in") of narrative, Brontë here voices the claim she will make for *Jane Eyre* that "this is not to be a regular autobiography" (149). This is the strategic authorial persona Elizabeth Gaskell speaks of when she describes Brontë's methodology: "She never wrote down a sentence until she clearly understood what she wanted to say, had deliberately chosen the words, and arranged them in the right

¹⁰¹ "Letter from Charlotte Brontë to William Smith Williams," September, 1848[?], *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë: With a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends*, vol. 2: 1848-1851, ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 782.

order.”¹⁰² But if she here imagines authorship as a strategic act, in her preface to her sister’s *Wuthering Heights* just two years later (1850), Brontë imagines authorship quite differently:

the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master – something that at times strangely wills and works for itself. He may lay down rules and devise principles, and to rules and principles it will perhaps for years lie in subjection; and then haply without any warning or revolt, there comes a time when... refusing absolutely to make ropes out of sea-sand any longer, it sets to work on statue-hewing... Be the work grim or glorious, dread or divine, you have little choice left but quiescent adoption. As for you – the nominal artist – your share in it has been to work passively under dictates you neither delivered nor could question.¹⁰³

“Subjection” is here imagined as that which keeps creativity at bay with strategic “rules,” and if it is “at times” ineffectual, it is sometimes successful, if only in making “ropes out of sea-sand.” Authorship appears from these two assessments to be the product of a relationship between a traditionally-conceived strategic agent, a mind who would wish to impose rules in order to retain authorial agency and produce “something of my own,” and the willful and tactical faculty of creativity.

This passage is usually read in light of the criticism received by *Wuthering Heights*, as Charlotte Brontë’s attempt to turn her sister Emily into a Romantic writer compelled by a Coleridgean imagination.¹⁰⁴ However, I want to take Charlotte Brontë’s

¹⁰² Gaskell, *The Life*, 246-47. Gaskell also quotes from Brontë’s obituary, which refers to an anecdote about Brontë’s strategic plan for *Jane Eyre*: “She once told her sisters that they were wrong -- even morally wrong -- in making their heroines beautiful as a matter of course. They replied that it was impossible to make a heroine interesting on any other terms. Her answer was, ‘I will prove to you that you are wrong. I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours.’ Hence, ‘Jane Eyre,’ said she in telling the anecdote” (247).

¹⁰³ Charlotte Brontë, “Editor’s Preface to the New [1850] Edition of *Wuthering Heights*,” *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Linda H. Peterson (Boston: Bedford/St Martin’s, 1992), 24.

¹⁰⁴ See, for instance, Patricia H. Wheat, *The Adytum of the Heart: The Literary Criticism of Charlotte Brontë* (Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press, 1992), 79; Lyn Pykett, *Emily Brontë* (Savage, MD:

commentary on authorship seriously as a statement about her own aesthetic, for she mobilizes the same image in *Villette*, when Lucy Snowe speaks of the “Creative Impulse” as an “irrational demon,” “the most intractable, the most capricious, the most maddening of masters” who, in an extended metaphor, violently demands Lucy’s sacrifice (395). Indeed, Brontë expressly applied this very same tactical metaphor to her own authorship in her letters to critic and physiologist George Henry Lewes, with whom she engaged in a bold correspondence about authorship after he wrote to her in praise of *Jane Eyre*.¹⁰⁵ In response to his repeated disparagements of “melodrama” in fiction, Brontë wrote in 1848:

If I ever *do* write another book, I think I will have nothing of what you call 'melodrama;' I *think* so, but I am not sure... When authors write best, or, at least, when they write most fluently, an influence seems to waken in them, which becomes their master -- which will have its own way -- putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature; new-moulding characters, giving un-thought-of turns to incidents, rejecting carefully-elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones.
Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we indeed counteract it?¹⁰⁶

Brontë’s preface to her sister’s novel is, then, when read alongside these other passages, not a mere recuperation of her sister as a Romantic who mobilized the impulse of a creative imagination, but rather a clear statement about her own narrative process,

Rowman & Littlefield, 1989), 12; and Donald David Stone, *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Throughout their correspondence, Brontë’s letters to Lewes concerned authorship, whether in response to his critical views about melodrama or, after the publication of *Shirley*, to his treatment of her as a “female” author.

¹⁰⁶ Gaskell, *A Life*, 274-75.

which becomes, I would argue, closer to Modernism than Romanticism in its aesthetic.¹⁰⁷ For this internal “influence” does not render the author a divine or inspired seer, nor is it a spontaneous feeling arising from habitual thought and a unified mind.¹⁰⁸ It arises from within the author’s own body and is itself sometimes grotesquely embodied: “a dark Baal with carven lips and blank eye-balls, and breast like the stone face of a tomb; and again, suddenly, at some turn, some sound...the irrational demon would wake unsolicited, would stir strangely alive, would rush from its pedestal like a perturbed Dagon, calling to its votary for a sacrifice” (*Villette* 395). In its perversity, erraticism, and opportunism, this tactical and embodied creative influence works “suddenly” and without the mind’s power of “thought.”

Strangely willful, this influence cannot be reduced to an unconscious process, for it is a creative act of which Brontë is profoundly conscious and even defensive. There is an implied “no” behind the rhetorical question “And should we try to counteract this influence?”, for Brontë has already framed this capacity as the mechanism of the “best” and “most fluent” writing. Brontë, like her narrator Lucy Snowe, understands the tactical potential of handing over agency to the faculty, the part of herself, best able to

¹⁰⁷ Boone’s similar claim for *Villette* as proto-modernist relies upon a psychoanalytic model, which I have argued is not at work in Brontë’s novels, and thus neglects the primary importance of physiological and associationist thought to this story of psychological experience. Boone, *Libidinal Currents*.

¹⁰⁸ In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth qualified his oft-quoted statement that “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” with the a comment that stressed the importance of the *mind* and *thought* (rather than “organic sensibility”) to Romantic conceptions of spontaneity: “though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects. William Wordsworth, “Observations Prefixed to the Second Edition of Several of the Foregoing Poems,” *Complete Poetical Works* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1870), 660-671; 662.

handle the situation. The “first-person” narrator that Brontë produces when she does “write another book” enacts this tactical aesthetic, a process of authoring and being that does not require the authorizing power of a mind but arises out of the body’s own fluency. In *Villette* we can begin to trace, as we will see more clearly in chapter 3, the emergence of an “I” that speaks to us from the body of the “person,” a body that can tell its own stories.

CHAPTER TWO

Our Mutual Friend and Network Form

What happens to narrative form when it can no longer be tied to the physical and psychological life of a single person? In this chapter I turn to Charles Dickens's serialized urban fiction – in particular his last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend* – to trace an alternative model of narrative form to the one we have seen in Brontë's first-person fiction. In the place of individual psychology, which governed the form of the novel Dickens inherited from Walter Scott and Jane Austen, Dickens shaped novel form around the physical impulses and attractions by which objects, people, and information circulate and interact. He did this, I will argue, by exploiting a potential in the serial form of publication he popularized for creating a type of urban life produced as (and not before) characters and objects are put into circulation. My approach in this chapter takes its impetus from an 1872 article by George Henry Lewes about Dickens's popularity. As a physiologist, Lewes turned to the physical processes of the nervous system to explain how Dickens's novels not only stimulate readers' nervous bodies directly, but also how they imagine characters and their collective life physiologically. Dickens's characters, argues Lewes, operate much like "frogs whose brains have been taken out for physiological purposes": they respond to stimulation just like the frogs on which Lewes experimented to demonstrate nervous action.¹ Lewes in effect used physiology to

¹ George Henry Lewes, "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," *Fortnightly Review* 11 no.62 (1872): 148.

answer the question that would so puzzle E. M. Forster over half a century later when he wondered how Dickens's characters could be so "flat" and yet also so full of vitality.

In this chapter I embrace and expand Lewes's approach to show how *Our Mutual Friend* creates a type of social and psychological life animated by combination and reaction between characters and objects. I argue that Dickens put into practice the same mechanisms to produce the social life of a city and the aesthetic form of the novel that Victorian scientists like Lewes and Charles Darwin used to imagine biological life - as a self-generating dynamic network. But by making use of the serial novel form, Dickens's city novel imagines positive alternatives to the biologically over-determined world described in physiological science by Lewes and in evolutionary science by Darwin. The result was a serial novel form that, by combining many physiologically motivated characters, could manifest its own internal logic of open-ended self-expansion.

In writing into being a city full of people, Dickens identified a potential in serial publication to use the mechanisms of a network - a self-generating and open system of interactions - to form a novel around the attractions and reactions among characters rather than around the psychological development of a single protagonist. Dickens was, of course, no materialist; his novels (particularly his early works) are more often read as sentimental and moralizing than mechanistic. Yet morality and sentiment cannot adequately explain relations among so many partially developed characters interacting with one another across 20 serial installments. What many readers interpret as Dickens's equation of virtue with sentimental love in his late novels is much better read as a reconciliation of conventional morality - which traditionally drives the novel and its marriage plot - with physiological mechanisms of attraction and response. While Dickens is not explicitly invested in biology or physiology, he bases the operations of

psychological and social life in *Our Mutual Friend* on the drives that compel and repel characters in shifting configurations across the novel's installments. Rather than salvaging latent sentimental inclinations as a cultural antidote to these drives, however, this novel fashions what is often mistakenly construed as traditional sentimental love out of these very forces of attraction. His novels therefore find a way to marry sentimental love and all its moral entailments with what Lewes and Darwin considered the natural imperatives driving the networks of the physiological body and biological life, respectively. Dickens accomplished this using serial publication to create a novel form that could accommodate, and shape itself as a process around, interactions between characters who change as they adapt to one another in each new installment and across the novel's expansive serial formation.

I. Serial Form

Because we are used to reading, writing about, and teaching Dickens's novels as worlds entire unto themselves, it is hardly surprising that we approach serialization backwards, starting from the perspective of whole novel and only then addressing serial parts as constitutive elements or fragments mysteriously choreographed to constitute the whole. Such a reading practice is influenced by theories such as Györg Lukács's account of the novel as a form that strives towards a vision of totality no longer implicit in modern life. The novel does this, for Lukács, by attempting to conjure such unity and moral certainty out of the biographical teleology of an individual's life. The serial form Dickens shaped, with its crisscrossing plots and world full of characters, seemed to eliminate all possibility of performing this sleight of hand and producing holistic unity across 20 months of publication. Reading serial novels with a view to unity and totality neglects

the reader's active role in managing a form-in-process, each part of which demands our investment in some new combination of characters, objects, and locales. Reading serial novels as "complete" forms, we tend to forget that a novel like *Our Mutual Friend* was read and written as 19 separate texts, one published each month (with the exception of a final double issue) from May 1864 until November 1865.² Each serial part – consisting of 32 pages of text and two illustrations – connects to others, gesturing backwards towards its predecessors and forwards towards future installments. And yet each installment exists as its own unit of narrative action within which a specific combination of characters are brought together and, in the words of a reviewer from the *Young Ladies' Journal* during its serialization, readers' attention can be "arrest[ed]" or "absorb[ed]" by particular characters or sets of characters without depending upon any sequential progress of story.³ In the seventh issue, this reviewer identifies Riah as the character whose actions and interactions absorb the reader; in the ninth, it is John Rokesmith; and in the sixth, Jenny Wren, of whom the reviewer writes: "As all other matters in the number are of secondary importance to this curious creation, we postpone any notice of the thread of the story being woven."⁴ These readers, insists the reviewer, are interested

² In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens revived the monthly installment format he chose for most of his novels, but which he had not used since *Little Dorrit* finished its serial run in 1857. Since that time, he had published two weekly novels: *A Tale of Two Cities* (serialized in *All the Year Round* from April to November 1859) and *Great Expectations* (December 1860 to August 1861). For more on the history of serial publication, see Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991); Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957); and Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

³ "Review of *Our Mutual Friend*," *Young Ladies Journal* 1 (16 November 1864): 501; (1 February 1865): 69.

⁴ "Review" *Young Ladies Journal* (26 October 1864): 453.

less in tracing a linear storyline than they are in their interested engagement with one installment of the text.⁵

Even if we were to set aside reception history and the experience of reading one part per month, the formal characteristics of a novel like *Our Mutual Friend* insist upon its inherent seriality.⁶ As *The Eclectic Review* put it, even when read as a “whole” text, this novel is less about “story” or “plot” than it is “a portfolio of sketches... of the London life of our times.”⁷ *The Westminster Review* in April 1866 insisted that it was “impossible for us here to analyze the whole work,” but that “Mr. Dickens does not suffer by the process. He is seen to the best advantage in detached pieces.”⁸ Victorian reviewers and critics of Dickens’s novels paid far more attention to these “detached pieces” and to their impact upon the reader than they did to the formal trajectory of the story. They frequently offered lengthy excerpts that, as Nicholas Dames has argued, reproduced for the reader, through an encounter with one part, the affective experience of reading the novel.⁹ Hippolyte Taine, writing just before the publication of *Our Mutual Friend*, illustrates the experience of reading a Dickens novel even in its entirety by calling

⁵ See Nicholas Dames on the turn towards affective Victorian reading practices that value *feeling* over *thinking* in *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007). See also Rachel Ablow’s edited collection, *The Feeling of Reading: Affective Experience and Victorian Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

⁶ In *The Physiology of the Novel*, Nicholas Dames traces a Victorian physiological novel theory that insisted upon a “sense of the novel as a process rather than a structure,” and focused on the *temporality* of reading (11). Dames is not concerned with serial reading, but argues that, “[f]or physiological novel theorists, the variable times of *actual* reading (a year for serial publication, a few weeks for book publication) are less important than the unarguably temporal process of *any* reading” (48). By turning here to the “whole” of Dickens’s novel as it is commonly republished, I draw upon Dames’s points about Victorian novel reading as a punctuated temporal process, but I insist that the form of (and the process of reading) a serial Dickens novel, even when read as a complete book, remains inherently serial.

⁷ “Mr. Dickens’s Romance of a Dust-Heap,” *The Eclectic Review* 9 no. 122 (1865): 456.

⁸ [Review of *Our Mutual Friend*] *The Westminster Review* 84-85 no. 168 (April 1866): 276.

⁹ See Nicholas Dames, “On Not Close Reading: The Prolonged Excerpt as Victorian Critical Protocol,” *The Feeling of Reading*, Ed. Rachel Ablow. 11-26.

attention to various characters and scenes, and by arguing that we experience “[t]he contrast, the rapid succession, the number of the sentiments... [W]e are immersed for two hundred pages in a torrent of new emotions, contrary and unceasing.”¹⁰ According to such accounts, a reader’s immersion or interest in Dickens’s novel depends upon being absorbed in characters within discrete episodes of the text. Too much attention to whole work or linear progression of story would only dilute the intensity of one’s experiential encounter with Dickensian form.

To read *Our Mutual Friend*, whether across 19 months or a few days, is to experience a punctuated process of formation, to oscillate between apparently disconnected and proliferating scenes and events. Each installment acts as a narrative apparatus within which Dickens brings together a new combination of characters in new spaces, works through a new set of problems, and leaves the reader with a set of questions and potential outcomes. Take, for instance, the last line of the first installment: “if Mr. Julius Handford had a twin brother upon earth, Mr. John Rokesmith was the man.”¹¹ Since we have already been led to suspect this association between Handford and Rokesmith, the identification is itself no surprise. What we cannot know is the consequence of splitting one person into multiple people, for Dickens opens up the possibility that a character, or a person, is not a self-contained unit, but a serial part capable of dividing and proliferating. Suspense works in *Our Mutual Friend* by the production of a generative gap between the potential and the actual, between a field of possibilities activated within one number and the actual events that could be made

¹⁰ Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, *History of English Literature*, vol. 3, trans. Henry Van Luan (New York: Colonial, 1900): 201.

¹¹ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 43. From this point in the chapter, all references to this novel will be cited parenthetically in the text.

manifest in some later installment – by the outcome, for instance, of the Lammles’s “scheme” against Society concocted at the end of the third installment (126), or by the consequence of Wegg and Venus’s “friendly move” initiated in the eighth (303). The serial reader experiences suspense by looping back to prior events, branching outward into a range of possible futures, and remaining absorbed while suspended in the gap between narrative units.¹² This reader must, in other words, become involved in the process of the novel’s formation of a “world.”

To write such a novel, Dickens treated each installment as a separate narrative unit with its own purpose in actualizing certain possibilities made possible by the sections he had already written and generating another set of possibilities for those he still had to write. To keep track of these possibilities, he kept working notes for each installment, complete sets of which survive for seven novels beginning with *Dombey and Son* (1846-47). It is in these working notes and chapter plans that we see form as the process of formation. As a testing ground for potential events and combinations of characters, the notes provided a space within which Dickens could pull together the characters he considered placing in collision with one another in each installment.

¹² Caroline Levine has argued that suspense encouraged readers to actively speculate and generate multiple possible outcomes, opening up the possibility that suspense is a type of proliferation rather than a simple matter of prolepsis, of advance notice or foreshadowing. Surprisingly, she does not consider the effects of serial publication upon suspense as generative of pause and speculation. “Narrative Networks: Bleak House and the Affordances of Form,” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 42 no. 3 (2009): 517–523. Garrett Stewart elaborates on the process by which speculation is generated by the text itself by referring to the production of virtual storylines as “phantom half stories” which “churn unworked in the eddying of the text” (515-16). Stewart’s reading offers a useful, if somewhat exaggerated, example of how Dickens’s urban novels produce branching virtual plotlines that cannot be reduced to the pictorial mapping of a formalism intent upon representing the novel as a holistic unity. *Novel Violence: A Narratography of Victorian Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

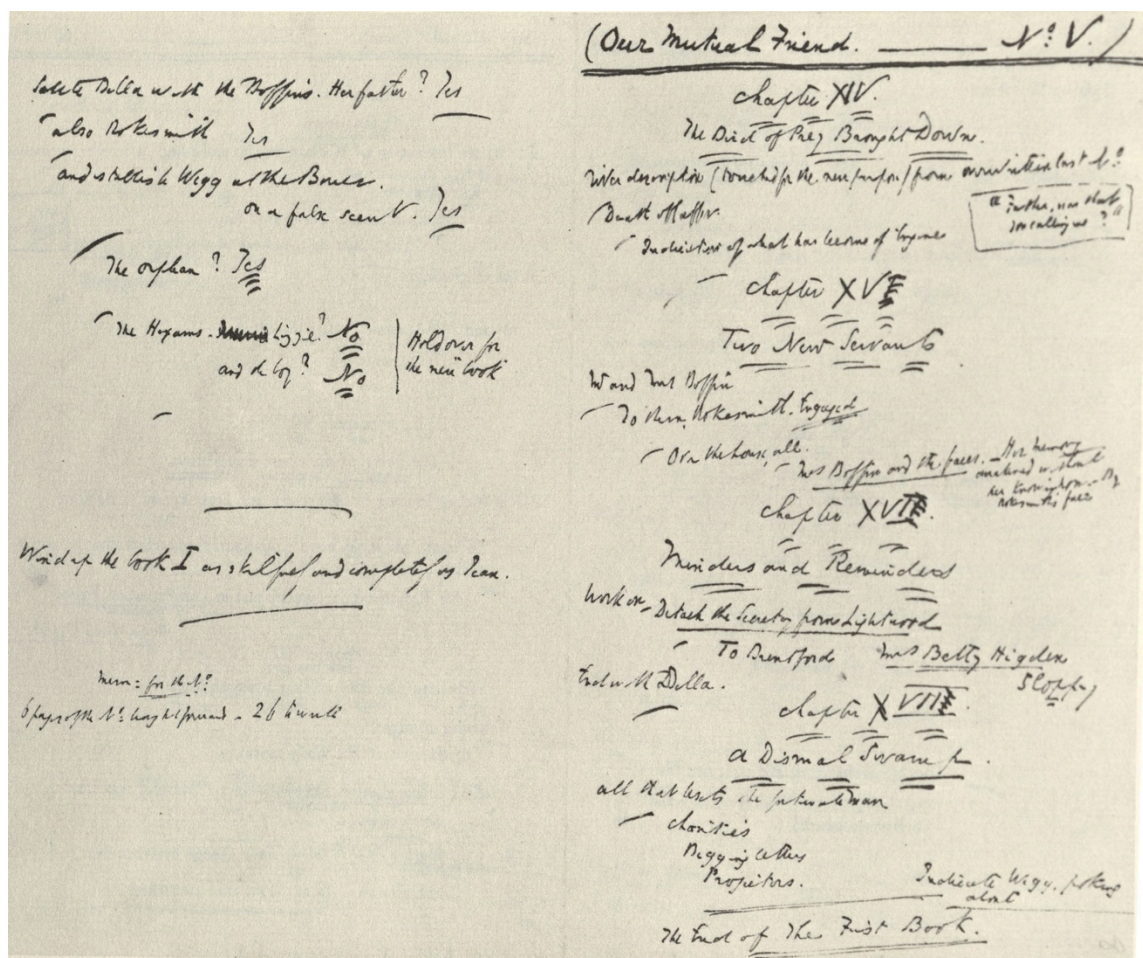


Figure 2: Image from Dickens's working notes for the fifth installment of *Our Mutual Friend*.¹³

Dividing a 7" x 9" pale blue sheet of paper into two halves, Dickens filled the right side with "construction" notes, indicating chapter titles and the chief events and substance of each, including occasional quotations and memorable details (see Figure 2). The left side is filled with generative notes such as long-term plans, queries, motifs, and memoranda.

¹³ Image from facsimile of manuscript held at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City and reproduced in Harry Stone, ed., *Dickens' Working Notes*, 342.

Taken together, the notes for a single novel record form-in-process rather than a pre-scripted plan to be followed.¹⁴ There is ample evidence, for instance, that the notes were written alongside rather than prior to the novel, including summaries of work completed so far, explicit memoranda recording the process of writing, and multiple inks for additions, check marks, answers to questions, and insertions above or below existing text.¹⁵

As an active part of the composition of *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens's working notes for this novel document the impact of serial publication upon his writing process. They record his overwriting of installments (for example in the fourth and eighth numbers); reminders about the number of pages still to write (as in his memo for number five); testing out or altering character names; a summary of the "Position of affairs at the end of the Second Book"; and most significantly those moments when he changes his mind about whether or not to feature an event or a character in an installment, frequently replying "No" to his own questions about who or what to include.¹⁶ The working notes are one in a series of documents that give us a sense of the process of a novel like *Our Mutual Friend*: changes of direction, alterations in response to reception, moments of indecision. These include Dickens's earlier book of memoranda,

¹⁴ Even though Harry Stone, in his preface to the working notes, stresses that Dickens wrote these working notes *during* the writing process, he, like many other critics, sees these notes primarily as a plan to be followed. The terms Stone uses include "carefully fashioning," "shaping," "controlling" (xxi), "carefully calculated," (xxiii), and "carefully worked designs" (xxxi). *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹⁵ The unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* has offered insight into the temporality of Dickens's working notes. Margaret Caldwell concludes that most of the right-hand side of the foolscap sheets was "usually noted after the writing of the number, as reminders." Appendix B: "Number Plans," *Edwin Drood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 219. In his introduction to *Dickens' Working Notes*, Harry Stone offers "evidence for [Dickens] working forward and backwards" in *Drood* and other novels "when Dickens occasionally changed ink, wrote with a very different nib, or interpolated comments after the fact." Stone, *Dickens' Working Notes*, xvi.

¹⁶ *Dickens' Working Notes*, 355.

the letters he wrote about the novel to his illustrator Marcus Stone and other friends and acquaintances during its publication, his heavily edited manuscripts, and his edited proofs. Reading the novel alongside these documents brings to light the ways in which its form is impacted by its production and reception; these documents contain what we might call a poetics of production.

The working notes require us to read each issue number as performing its own its own set of narrative functions, which involve setting in motion certain actions through the conjunctions of multiple characters. The left-hand generative notes frequently include references to the kind of narrative *work* that each installment will perform. Take, for instance, the notes for the third issue, in which Dickens instructs himself to:

Work out the story towards:

Mr and Mrs Boffin's shewing their disinterestedness
Taking Bella Wilfer to live with them
And x Rokesmith's becoming Secretary.

/

Get all the affairs square, and the Boffins square
clear the ground, behind and before.

/

Glimpse of Wrayburn.¹⁷

This third number will not just *include* Mr. and Mrs. Boffin's disinterestedness and their decision to incorporate Bella Wilfer and John Rokesmith into their home; it will "work out" these events, use this narrative installment to "clear the ground." Throughout the number plans, the generative notes are filled with active verbs that indicate how each installment will "work in," "lay the ground [for]," "take up," "bring out," "establish," "wind up," "hold over," "carry through," "pursue," "reserve," "work up," "work out,"

¹⁷ Ibid., 339

Each installment brings characters together like chemicals that, when mixed, will spark reactions, and the working notes read like an exploratory testing ground for these chemical reactions. The left-hand notes display Dickens in the process of testing out what might come of certain combinations; they are filled with questions, usually featuring character names. Take, for instance, Dickens's notes for the seventh installment of *Our Mutual Friend* (see Figure 3 below):

[illegible]

¹⁹ Ibid., 347.

The orphan and Roff? No. - slight M

Lizzie? Very slight. Carry through.

Mr & Mrs Lammle and their prospects? No

— and a new man? Yes.

Rumty

Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene together? No.

Young Fledgeby

Conversation Fledgeby

Famination Fledgeby

Yes.

Elaborate

Figure 3: Image from Dickens's working notes for the seventh installment of *Our Mutual Friend*.²⁰

Using two different inks, Dickens enacts a conversation with himself in which one part generates possibilities for the installment, while the other selective part either closes off those possibilities or initiates their materialization. Indeed, this process of generation and actualization anticipates the form of the novel itself, in which each narrative installment will set in motion multiple possibilities for future installments, asking the reader to speculate between numbers before it will actualize particular events. In these notes, Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn hang momentarily in the balance, as

²⁰ Image from facsimile of manuscript held at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City and reproduced in Harry Stone, ed., *Dickens' Working Notes*, 347.

Dickens first dismisses them from this installment, and then emphatically incorporates them, “Elaborately.” In pushing “[t]he orphan and Sloppy” through to the next number and reminding himself to “[c]arry through” Lizzie, Dickens uses this installment as a locale for only certain kinds of narrative work; the rest can wait for another number.

The working notes turn a narrative installment into an interactive arena that changes everyone within it. In this particular installment, Dickens indicates that he will bring Georgiana Podsnap into interaction with the Lammles and stage the impossibility of her combination with Fascination Fledgeby; “but they won’t come together, no!” or so he writes in his right-hand notes.²¹ He will stage a “quarrel” between Fledgeby and Mr. Lammle to set up an exploitative antagonism between two manipulative men. He will introduce the new “gentle Jew” (testing out names for him in the right-hand notes: “—Oden? —Reheiah? —Riah?”) and undermine the usurious stereotype he had been accused of in his caricature of Fagin, instead providing a victim for Fledgeby’s manipulative exploitation and a caretaker for Lizzie Hexam.²² Finally, he will create a questionable domestic space within which he can place Eugene and Mortimer and then bring “To Them: Young Hexam and Bradley,” so that he can “work to” Eugene’s lack of will and action. Through the addition of two new characters, an exploiter and a caretaker, this installment will subtly but definitively alter the social dynamics it has established in the previous six numbers.

²¹ Ibid., 347.

²² Dickens received a letter from Eliza Davis, the wife of the Jewish solicitor who purchased Dickens’s house, criticizing his prejudiced portrayal of the Jewish Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, and suggesting that he may have been responsible for encouraging a “vile prejudice” against her race. Dickens defended himself in reply to Davis, but when editing a new edition of *Oliver Twist* in 1867, he began to change references to “the Jew” to “Fagin” or “he.” Michael Slater suggests that Dickens may have had Davis’s criticism in mind when he created Riah, “the gentle Jew.” Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 516-17.

The form of *Our Mutual Friend* is so inherently serial – if we take “serial” to mean this interactive collision between elements that together make up a living form – that its very inception involved the interactive combination of several separate ideas for characters and scenes that come to life when placed in combination. In addition to the working notes Dickens kept for individual novels, he also kept a separate notebook from 1855 for at least ten years, into which he jotted down random short ideas for stories, characters, and lists of possible titles and names, many of which he later marked as “Done” in published novels and stories (see Figure 4). Each notation in this memoranda book is little more than a snapshot of a habitual action or a static caricature, but when Dickens came to search for ideas for a new novel in 1862, he turned to these disparate ideas and, two years later, was finally able to put them into narrative combination.²³ *Our Mutual Friend* can be traced to approximately 19 notes spread throughout this book of memoranda, the first confirmed one dating from as early as 1855, nine years before the novel’s serial run: “—And by denying a thing, supposes that he altogether puts it out of existence.”²⁴ Following this notation, Dickens has later written, in different ink: “*Done in Podsnap.*” Other notes explicitly marked as pertaining to *Our Mutual Friend* include such disparate references as: “The office-boy for ever looking out of window, who never has anything to do. *Done in Our Mutual*” and “Found Drowned. The descriptive bill upon the wall, by the waterside. *Done in Our Mutual.*”²⁵ Alongside these and other explicitly marked notes, we find those not indicated as “done” in this novel, but clearly the basis

²³ See Slater 506-7 for an account of Dickens’s difficulty beginning to write *Our Mutual Friend*. “Alas! I have hit upon nothing for a story,” he wrote to Forster in April 1862. “Again and again I have tried” (qtd. Slater 507).

²⁴ Charles Dickens. *Charles Dickens’ Book of Memoranda: A Photographic and Typographic Facsimile of the Notebook Begun in January 1855*, ed. Fred Kaplan (New York: New York Public Library, 1981), 16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 19; 36.

for its characters, including a reference to what would become the Veneerings: “The perfectly New people. Everything new about them.”²⁶

That the novel was materially formed from an amalgamation of disparate parts indicates that it does not develop as a linear progressive narrative or as the unfolding of a “main” plot, but rather as a series of episodic combinations and alterations that generates its affect from these combinations. The formal and material construction of a city novel like *Our Mutual Friend* stages a serial form of interaction between multiple disparate scenes and characters, each conceived independently of one another. Dickens uses seriality to combine and re-combine characters according to the mobile interactions and mutable configurations of urban social life. Raymond Williams has referred to Dickens’s ability to convey London’s “miscellaneity, its crowded variety, its randomness of movement” and the “hurrying seemingly random passing of men and women” through its streets.²⁷ It is seriality that allows Dickens to adapt the novel to a form that can imagine such an urban life with its numerous fleeting and serial interactions between many heterogeneous people.

²⁶ Ibid., 101.

²⁷ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 154-55.

Lammles.”²⁹ Similarly, Boffin and Wegg are conceived not as separate people engaged in a dialogue, but as mutually dependent products of their confused interaction: “Gibbon’s Decline and Fall. The two characters, one reporting to the other as he reads. Both getting confused as to whether it is not all going on now.”³⁰ In most instances, when incorporating these characters into *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens does little to develop or offer intrinsic psychological complexity to the caricatures that appeared in his memoranda book. Instead he places them in juxtaposition with one another and with a range of animated objects in order to provoke reactions and fluctuations in habitual behaviors. The Lammles’ “scheme” against Society, for instance, thrives when they are placed in combination with the “perfectly New people,” the Veneerings, and the Podsnaps. Indeed, the Lammles’ scheme is just one of the many exploitative schemes that make up the abstracted system of “Society.” But when Dickens finally places the Lammles into interaction with the affable Boffins, the two cannot coexist. The Boffins’s tempering influence renders the Lammles’ “league and covenant” ineffectual.

The serial form of *Our Mutual Friend* consequently differs from the seriality of novels by Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, or Thomas Hardy – all of whom were prolific serial novelists. We can credit Dickens with popularizing the serial format with his *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-37), the fourth part of which sold 40,000 copies in one month, but serial publication in discrete parts or in magazines, newspapers, and periodicals was not unique to Dickens. It became a dominant format throughout the second half of the nineteenth century due to a combination of technological advances in printing and distribution and a rise in

²⁹ Dickens, *Book of Memoranda*, 93.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

literacy rates.³¹ To claim that *Our Mutual Friend* is quintessentially serial in comparison with a wealth of other serial fiction is to claim that Dickens capitalizes upon the potential of serial publication to alter the form of the novel. Whereas George Eliot lamented the effects of what she termed the “Nightmare of the Serial” on her “conception of life and character,” Dickens maximized its potential to *create* his own conception of life in the Victorian city, a life produced as (and not before) characters and objects are put into interaction.³² For Eliot, publication had to serve the interests of her *a priori* conception of life and character and her belief in the organic wholeness of her novels; consequently, she repeatedly stressed a wish to complete her novels, or at least “see[] nearly to the end of the work,” before beginning serial publication (*GE Journal* March 1, 1862).³³ Dickens, as a pioneer of serial publication who admitted to his concerns about the “detached and desultory form of publication” he chose for all his work, understood the tension between serial parts and the novel as an integral whole.³⁴ In the preface to *Pickwick Papers*, he stressed the challenge of making sure that “every number should be, to a certain extent, complete in itself, and yet that the whole twenty

³¹ For more on the history and popularity of serial publication, see Hughes and Lund, *The Serial Novel*; Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader*; and Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction*.

³² George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters, 1859-1861*, ed. Gordon S. Haight Volume 3 (20 Dec. 1859); Volume 2 (11 June 1857) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954). Accessed September 2013. <http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com>.

³³ *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), March 1, 1862.

Eliot published half of her novels in serial form and half in three-volume format. She repeatedly stressed her desire to postpone serialization until she had fully conceived a novel. Of the early stages of *The Mill on the Floss*, which she originally planned to serialize in John Blackwood’s Magazine before changing her mind, she wrote: “I have faith that the flower will come. Not enough faith, though, to make me like the idea of beginning to print till the flower is fairly out – till I know the end as well as the beginning” (Letters 3:133); “I think I should worry myself still more if I began to print before the thing is essentially complete” (Ibid.: 184-85). For more on Eliot’s attitude towards serialization, see Carol A. Martin, *George Eliot’s Serial Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994).

³⁴ Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xxxiv.

numbers, *when collected*, should form one tolerably harmonious whole” (my emphasis).³⁵ The “whole,” is here a product of *collection*, a term that preserves the integrity of serial pieces. But by the time he published *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), he had evidently faced up to his need to “put a strong constraint upon myself to resist the temptation of the current Monthly Number, and to keep a steadier eye upon the general purpose and design.”³⁶

Dickens’s repeated references to the tension between the novel as parts and the concept of a “whole” novel underscore the challenge his seriality posed to a tradition of novel writing that valued something like Aristotelian unity. Reviewers accused him of “work[ing] upon no plan,” having “no design at all,” of “absolute want of construction,” and his books of “seem[ing] to have grown as the book appeared by numbers, instead of having been mapped out beforehand.”³⁷ But if his prefaces repeatedly disclose an uneasiness about seriality – significantly displayed at the moments when he was faced with re-packaging serial novels as complete books and thus situating himself in the tradition of “the greatest novelists in the English language” – Dickens never abandoned his practice of publishing *and writing* serially.³⁸ In prefacing his early work, he defended his formal decision to write a “series of adventures, in which the scenes are ever

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), xxiii.

³⁷ R. H. Horne, *A New Spirit of the Age* (London: Smith, Elder, 1844), 72; George Brimley, *Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 282; Leigh Hunt, quoted in Slater, 137.

Horne was actually favorable towards Dickens, but he assumed that Dickens “works upon no plan.” He explained that Dickens “has a leading idea, but no design at all. He knows what he is going to *do* in the main, but how he will do this, it is quite clear he leaves to the impulse of composition” (72).

³⁸ Dickens, *Pickwick*, xxxiv. According to Michael Slater’s biography, Dickens originally intended *Barnaby Rudge* to be published as a whole, three-decker novel (129). Despite this intention, Dickens published all fifteen of his novels in serial installments. *Barnaby Rudge* would be published in weekly parts in Dickens’s own short-lived periodical, *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, in 1841.

changing, and the characters come and go” by arguing that novel form was inherently suited to the “series” and stating that “the same objection has been made to the works of some of the greatest novelists in the English language.”³⁹ By the time he wrote *Our Mutual Friend*, however, he was willing to acknowledge how his brand of serial writing transformed the novel form of Richardson or Fielding, novels that focus on a single character. In his personal letters, as early as 1846 Dickens had begun to embrace the “branches and offshoots and meanderings that come up” in serial writing.⁴⁰ In order to understand just why Dickensian form was so well adapted to serial publication, we need to understand the tradition within which Dickens first became a novelist.

Dickens’s city novels developed out of and transformed a tradition of the urban sketch and the city novel, as exemplified by Dickens’s own *Sketches by Boz* and G.W.M. Reynold’s *The Mysteries of London*, an infinitely expandable magazine collection of city mystery stories. Unlike an earlier, eighteenth-century tradition of serial fiction, in which novels published in parts has often been published previously in volume form, this type of serial story achieved an open potential for continuance.⁴¹ Reynolds’s text, published in weekly parts from 1844 to 1846, was a fragmented and constantly expanding collection of mystery stories featuring a bewildering number of characters that rarely resurfaced outside of one microplot. Dickens’s early urban sketches similarly featured an assemblage of abbreviated scenes, vivid descriptions, and discrete vignettes published in

³⁹ Dickens, *Pickwick*, xxxiv.

⁴⁰ Dickens, quoted in John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1872-74), vol. 2, 340.

⁴¹ The earliest eighteenth-century novels to be printed in parts included Robinson Crusoe, as well as pirated slightly abridged versions of popular novels. Martin, *George Eliot’s Serial Fiction*, 7. The earliest work written and published serially in magazine form was Smollett’s *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760-61), but most serialized literature in the eighteenth century was in the form of a *series* of plays, essays, sermons, political works, or treatises.

newspapers as “little pictures of life and manners.”⁴² Dickens explicitly framed his early novels as accumulative sketches or papers, as in the *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, or *Nicholas Nickleby*, to which he referred in personal letters as “various papers.”⁴³ But even as Dickens began to consider himself a novelist and to pay attention to the “whole pattern” of his works, his novels remained firmly rooted in an additive serial tradition.⁴⁴

Our Mutual Friend negotiates between two extremes: the endless additive form of Reynolds’s serial stories or Dickens’s own sketches on the one hand, and on the other hand the use of a trope such as Eliot’s unifying consciousness to provide holistic enclosure to serial novel form. Dickens’s seriality produces an expanding middle that capitalizes upon the openness of the serial sketch or story and its ability to include vast amounts of social information and vast numbers of characters, and gesture towards still more. It exploits the potential to inject variety or change into each installment and thus to turn the novel’s form into an ongoing formation, a taking-form. He is nevertheless miraculously capable of containing this dynamic process within a circulatory system. That is, Dickens generates an excess of narrative elements and then manages that excess by making it a feature of a self-contained system in which interactions are governed by a few constant organizing principles. Where Reynolds produces a series of adventures in order to comply with the format of serial publication, Eliot famously inserted unifying metaphors and psychological complexities that countered the disruption of serial publication. In contrast to both, Dickens appropriates serial form as the dynamic

⁴² Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* (London: Penguin, 1995), 7.

⁴³ Quoted in Slater, 136. Even as he thought ahead to future writing in his second preface to the *Sketches*, he thought of his future potential novels as “connected works of fiction,” stressing “connection” over integral unity. *Sketches*, 8.

⁴⁴ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 821.

principle of an urban environment that forms itself, serial part by serial part, according to its own systematic principles.

II. Seriality, Character, and Life in Aggregate

Unable to locate in Dickens's novels the kind of fraught interiority commonly associated with psychological depth, E.M. Forster, in his 1927 lectures, wrestled with the question of Dickens's appeal. Just how could he produce novels so full of "flat" characters, so devoid of the psychological attributes of individual consciousness, and yet still so full of *life*? E.M. Forster could only attribute Dickens's characters' strange vitality to psychological depth in the author himself: "Probably the immense vitality of Dickens causes his characters to vibrate a little, so that they borrow his life and appear to lead one of their own."⁴⁵ Forster was half right in attributing the nervous energy of Dickens's characters to physical "vibrations." By assuming that human vitality must originate in the psychological depths of individual life, however, Forster is also half wrong. If Dickens's is notable for creating a "world" overfull of characters, no two of which are quite the same, the vital principle that animates that world is to be found not within but between characters.

In Dickens's hands, serial form requires and makes possible a new way of forming character. Each serial installment brings together people and things in new combinations that change the direction of narrative this way and that to form a dynamic

⁴⁵ E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Arnold, 1937), 98. Forster is not alone in attributing the vitality of Dickens's novels to the author's own imagination. In his *History of English Literature*, Hippolyte Taine would insist that "An imagination so lucid and energetic cannot but animate inanimate objects without an effort. It provokes in the mind in which it works extraordinary emotions, and the author pours over the objects which he figures to himself something of the ever-welling passion which overflows in him" (189-90); "His imagination is so lively that it carries everything with it in the path which it chooses" (192).

web of nomadic people. Dickens's version of a modern person is one produced interactively, in concert with others. Characters change as a result of forces from within and without that make them collide, combine, and break apart. Thus rather than a full-fledged protagonist, Dickens gives us, in the case of *Our Mutual Friend*, the substitutable John Harmon/Rokesmith/Handford, whose fluctuating identity is a mutable product of its shifting relation to others in an unstable milieu. His various avatars move through the city appearing here as Julius Handford, there as John Rokesmith, a man whose name and behavior change according to his surroundings and the other characters with whom he interacts. Having lost his identity when drugged and left for dead, he explains his lack of a single, essential self as a state of non-being: "There was no such thing as I, within my knowledge" (369). Although attempting to pin down his identity by attaching himself to his father's old servants, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, John's role and name turn out to be replaceable; the Boffins adopt another orphan, little Johnny, as his "namesake" (330).

Dickens underscores this instability of identity by altering the orphan plot in which a character without family traditionally discovers a stable locus of identity in a home. This novel refuses to "fit" the new orphan, Little Johnny, within the Boffin household, and he dies almost as soon as he enters this domestic space. Like Mr. Venus's skeletons made from the heterogeneous parts of multiple people, characters in this novel are, like Johnny, "miscellaneous ones" who "can't be got to fit" securely in a proper place (79). Little Johnny's fleeting presence in *Our Mutual Friend* gestures back to *Oliver Twist*, in which the orphan's incorporation within a house or home seems a possible (if problematic) means for establishing a stable locus of identity. Indeed, by the time he wrote *Great Expectations* and *Bleak House*, Dickens had already begun to undermine, even as he re-worked, this orphan plot in ways that acknowledged the

difficulty and artificiality of producing a continuous personal identity. *Bleak House* breaks up that model when Esther comes down with smallpox.⁴⁶ *Our Mutual Friend* abandons it completely to replace it with a form that privileges the fluid nature of personal identity.

That Dickens gestures in his final completed novel towards the impossibility of such an orphan plot within the mechanism of this complex urban world marks *Our Mutual Friend* as a novel in which the function of the home has been transformed from a safe-haven for producing and anchoring identity to one of many temporary relay-points for interactions between characters who will be altered as a result of their passage through that space. Little Johnny and Betty Higden temporarily enter into the Boffins's home, only to pass out again and succumb to death shortly afterwards. The Veneerings's home serves as a relay point for members of Society, who are always referred to as "the dearest and oldest of friends" but (to Mr. Twemlow's dismay) cannot retain a secure place within it (245). Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn surround themselves with the trappings of domesticity – "rolling-pin, spice-box, shelf of brown jars, chopping-board, coffee-mill, dresser elegantly furnished with crockery, saucepans and pans, roasting-jack, a charming kettle, an armoury of dish-covers" – in a nod to the belief that "[t]he moral influence of these objects, in forming the domestic virtues, may have an immense influence" (284). But their space of fabricated domesticity does quite the opposite; it accommodates a series of "odd visit[s]" that will

⁴⁶ Nancy Armstrong argues that Dickens "drive[s] home the point of our common biology" in *Bleak House* by introducing a smallpox epidemic that spreads from the pauper's graveyard to the household, associating Esther by her scars with the London population: "Her participation in the life of the population comes at the cost of the individuality that places Esther securely within the liberal society of *Bleak House*." "When Gender Meets Sexuality in the Victorian Novel," In *The Cambridge Companion to The Victorian Novel*, ed. Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 180-81.

bring Eugene into contact with Bradley Headstone, Charley Hexam, “Mr. Dolls,” and Rogue Riderhood, all of which lead inevitably to his attempted murder at the hands of the schoolmaster (287). Finally, Lizzie Hexam finds herself drawn to a household in which domestic hierarchy has been upturned in a “dire reversal of the places of parent and child,” a house within which she will be brought into dangerous contact – again by forces beyond her control – with Bradley Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn (241).

This is a novel filled with orphans, people disconnected from those anchors of identity such as kinship, a home, a social class, even a stable name, who roam through a series of places and interactions, in and out of homes and other spaces of interaction, much as they roam in and out of serial installments. We might compare Dickens’s characters to free radicals compelled by inertia and combination.⁴⁷ Social life is guided by a sequence of unmotivated encounters, just as the plot itself is set in motion by the seemingly random encounter between Old Harmon and the tempestuous child Bella Wilfer as she throws a tantrum in the city streets. The social world that develops from this inauspicious beginning is itself a series of chance encounters among characters whose interactions move the novel forward in time toward no overarching objective except to keep moving. Characters act, react, and adapt to one another to form what can best be described as a network.

My choice of “network” as a way to describe both the form of *Our Mutual Friend* and the interactions between its characters pushes us beyond a critical language that

⁴⁷ Although the concept of free radicals was not discovered until 1900, I use the term because it provides a useful biochemical analogy for the agentless and recurrent process of interaction and reaction that operates according to laws beyond the will of characters. Free radicals are unstable molecules with an odd (unpaired) number of electrons that have an extremely high chemical reactivity. “Searching” to return to a ground state, they will attempt to pair with, or steal, electrons from other cellular structures or molecules, often producing new free radicals and initiating or continuing a chain reaction.

relies on twentieth-century equations of novel form with a developing consciousness that has underpinned definitions of the novel as a genre from Henry James to E.M. Forster, from Györg Lukács to F.R. Leavis. These early critics voiced two intersecting complaints about Dickens's novels: 1) they were *loose* because they included too much of life, too much and too extravagant detail for unified self-containment, and 2) they lacked psychological realism. Lord David Cecil would sum up both of these indictments in 1934 when he described Dickens as having "no sense of form" because "[h]is books have no organic unity; they are full of detachable episodes, characters who serve no purpose in furthering the plot" and "he does not tell us much of the inner life."⁴⁸ Leavis found it necessary to leave Dickens out of his Great Tradition because of his "loose inclusiveness."⁴⁹ For James, such formal looseness was inseparable from what he saw, particularly in *Our Mutual Friend*, as Dickens's inability to articulate psychologically rounded individuals: "He has created nothing but figure. He has added nothing to our understanding of human character."⁵⁰

Rather than assume that the novel is and should be the story of an individual, I suggest that we consider Dickensian departure from that form as an alternative form in its own right. When E. M. Forster labeled Dickens's characters "flat" in comparison with those complex and "rounded" characters that would be revered by the Great Tradition, he obviously thought that flatness indicated a *lack*, or a displacement, of individual life. Thus he is at a loss to explain the vitality generated by the interactions that turn Dickens's city into a dynamic network. To put "flat characters" in alternatively positive

⁴⁸ David Cecil, *Victorian Novelists: Essays in Revaluation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 22; 38.

⁴⁹ F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (New York: Stewart, 1950), 20.

⁵⁰ Henry James, "Our Mutual Friend," *The Nation* (21 Dec. 1865), 787.

terms, we can see them as singular, representative of no one but themselves, and in their behaviors demonstrative of life in aggregate. Theirs is a life produced by interdependency and adaptation, one that takes the agency attributed to individual will and distributes it across entire communities of characters. Network form gives Dickens the means of accomplishing this task. It provides him with an organizing principle while allowing him to exploit the openness and variability of serial publication.

By invoking a network, I mean to suggest a formal principle quite different from the mapped character networks that Franco Moretti uses to represent the novel's form. In contrast to Moretti, as well as to Caroline Levine and Jonathan Grossman on networks in Dickens, I compare Dickens's network form to the networks of Victorian science not as an analogous structure, and thus a fixed form, but rather as another – distinctively literary – version of a living system, a form-in-process.⁵¹ Dickens's characters never exist all at once, as a totality, but are parts of an open, interactive, and distributive network. Such a network was perfectly adapted not only to serial publication but also to the experience of reading the serial novel, which allowed the reader to encounter a world always in the process of being made, dismantled, retrofitted, updated, and remade. In creating a distinctively serial form, Dickens also replaced a novel bound to psychological continuity with a self-generating network propelled by the affective interactions of flat

⁵¹ Moretti begins his article "Network Theory, Plot Analysis" by asking how plot can be quantified and using what he calls networks, or diagrammed maps, to visualize "time turned into space." He analyzes the "chapter-networks" of *Our Mutual Friend*, remarking on the symmetry and regularity of the interactions between characters in each chapter. Franco Moretti, "Network Theory, Plot Analysis," *New Left Review* 68 (2011): 82; 94; 96. In her article on *Bleak House*, Caroline Levine identifies formal networked "principles of connection," including "the law, disease, philanthropy, the space of the city, glass, gossip, and the family tree," by which she answers the novel's question about what links together the various elements of its plot. Levine, "Narrative Networks," 518. And Jonathan Grossman argues that Dickens configured narrative form to enact the networked community produced by his era's systematic networking of transportation systems. Jonathan H. Grossman, *Charles Dickens's Networks: Public Transport and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

characters who either remain incorrigibly the same or else change on a dime in response to others.

III. Victorian Networks: Dickens and Science

I am using a concept of a network to describe *Our Mutual Friend* that may at first seem anachronistically associated with a late twentieth-century network theory that focuses on multidirectional flows between nodes that are constantly in the process of forming and dissolving. Emerging in the late 1990s at the intersection of internet-era computer science and social science, a “new science” of networks accentuated the “dynamical processes” that make networks evolutionary systems rather than static structures.⁵² Similarly, in social theory, Bruno Latour and Michael Callon’s constructivist network theory emphasizes the performance of relations that are repeatedly made and re-made; actors (human and non-human) and their actions are determined by ever-shifting relationships that constitute a network of interdependent social practices. But this notion of a network as a dynamic form is anything but new. The term has roots in the sixteenth-century as a structural “netted” form of interlaced fabrics, wires, or threads, and it gained traction during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a term

⁵² Mark Newman, Albert-László Barabási, and Duncan Watts, *The Structure and Dynamics of Networks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 7. The “new science of networks,” a label used by Barabási, Buchanan, and Watts, is an interdisciplinary science drawing from mathematics, biology, social science, and computer science. For more on new network science, see Duncan Watts, “The ‘New’ Science of Networks,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 243-270; Albert-László Barabási, *Linked: The New Science of Networks* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2002); and Mark Buchanan, *Nexus: Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking Theory of Networks* (New York: Norton, 2002).

for complex structures within living systems.⁵³ It was in the Victorian period, however, when “network” began to refer to systems of interconnection within and between groups of people, including networks of communication.⁵⁴ Chambers Encyclopedia (1860), for instance, described “[t]he continent of Europe” as “one vast network of telegraphic lines” and used the phrase “close net-work of communication” to refer to a set of small roads.⁵⁵ Victorian science used the term to describe biological life as entangled webs of interconnection characterized not by fixed structure but by constant change and process. In order to understand how Dickens reimagined social life as a network of relations, and furthermore how his fiction modified the scientific concept of networked life, we need to situate his city novels in a wider Victorian effort to understand all life as a network.

The most explicit use of the language of networks to turn static structures into plastic forms was found in Victorian physiology. This should not surprise us, for the discipline developed as a species of inquiry falling somewhat awkwardly between anatomy and psychology as the field that could explain the relationship between formal structure and experiential phenomena. The principal concern of physiology, particularly as it related to its sister-science, psychology, was the nervous system. And the chosen metaphor for describing the structure of the nervous system was the network. The term helped physiologists describe the composition of nervous tissue, which they understood as made up of many intricate crossing and re-crossing pathways. Their primary concern

⁵³ For example, in 1724 Richard Blackmore referred to “the curious and wonderful Net-Work of Veins.” *A Treatise of Consumptions and Other Distempers Belonging to the Breast and Lungs* (London: John Pemberton, 1724), 19.

⁵⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary* shows the term’s gradual association with transportation and telecommunication beginning in the nineteenth century. For more on Dickens and the

⁵⁵ “Telegraph,” *Chambers Encyclopedia* (1860) Vol. 9; “Alps,” Vol. 1.

was with nervous function, the processes by which nerves were formed and by which they transmitted impulses that set life in motion. Lewes, a pioneer of physiological science, argued as early as his 1859 *Physiology of Common Life* that physiology had moved beyond understanding the individual body and its nervous system as a static anatomized structure. Using language of movement and change, in *The Physical Basis of Mind* (1877) he described the nervous system as “a continuous net-work of variable forms.”⁵⁶ “Net-work” – a noun that implies a verb – offered a language for describing the physical interconnectedness of form in a way that privileged passage and process (“work”) rather than merely structure (“net”). The nervous network emphasized the passage of what was commonly referred to as “nerve-force,” “nerve-action,” “nerve-power,” or “neurility” through nervous fibers.

Lewes and many of his fellow late-century physiologists specifically rejected the popular metaphor of a telegraph network to describe the nervous system because, they argued, it lacked plasticity and instead described nerves as passive structural transmitters. “A preestablished continuous network,” argued Spanish neurologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal in a 1894 Royal Society of London lecture, if imagined as “a sort of grid of telegraph wires in which one can create neither new stations nor new lines – is something rigid, immutable, incapable of being changed.”⁵⁷ It is therefore not suitable for describing the “free arborizations” of cells in the cerebral cortex. As Laura Otis has demonstrated, such mid-century physiologists as Hermann von Helmholtz, Emil DuBois-Reymond, and Camillo Golgi, who *did* use technological communications networks to describe the nervous system, did so at a time when the telegraph network

⁵⁶ Lewes, *The Physical Basis of Mind* (London: Kegan Paul, 1893), 155.

⁵⁷ Otis, *Networking*, 68-69.

was still very much in formation. By the end of the century, when most lines and stations had been completed and its routes well established, the telegraph became less useful as a metaphor for the active network of the nervous system – a living system of interaction and construction.⁵⁸ Lewes, however, rejected the telegraph metaphor network as early as 1859, before those networks had been well established, because for him the analogy implied that nerves were merely “passive conductors” which “transmit” messages.⁵⁹ For Lewes, a machine or a communications network was a misleading analogy for the nervous system because these technological models required one to distinguish between a static nervous structure and a separate motive force – between form and process. “[N]erves have a force of their *own*,” Lewes explained, and this nerve-force, or “neurility,” made the nervous network a constantly mutable system.⁶⁰ The organism, including the human organism, he argued, “exhibits [a] plasticity”; it is “a system of forces which is incessantly undergoing modifications” in response to external stimuli.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Otis offers this insight: “Perhaps the quality of technological communications networks that most appealed to physiologists was their dynamism, a characteristic that disappeared once they were fully constructed. To Ramón y Cajal, both the telegraph metaphor and Golgi’s nerve network did a grave injustice to the nervous system by denying its plasticity, its most essential attribute” (69).

The electromagnetic telegraph was first formally adopted in Britain by the Great Western Railway in 1839, when a 13-mile section of telegraph was installed between West Drayton and Paddington. By 1868, there were 1,300 telegraph stations with over 10,000 miles of line, but four years later this would grow to 5,179 stations and over 87,000 miles of line. The first (although short-lived) trans-Atlantic telegraph cable was installed in 1858, and it was replaced by a more permanent connection in 1866.

The use of telegraph networks as an analogy for nervous networks also worked in reverse. In his 1852 book *Electricity and the Electric Telegraph*, George Wilson wrote: “Such a network of wires, we may hope, will one day connect together the ends of the earth; and, like the great nerves of the human body, unite in living sympathy all the far-scattered children of men.” (London: Longman, 1852), 77.

⁵⁹ Lewes, *Physiology*, 14.

⁶⁰ Lewes, *Physiology*, 14.

⁶¹ Lewes, *Problems*, 54; 92.

Consequently, when describing nervous networks physiologists tended to reverse the causal hierarchy of nervous structure and nerve force, using the active function of nerves to explain their very arrangement. Nervous processes – often described with the kinetic language of waves, currents, or draughts – determined the form of the nervous network. In the first volume of the third edition of his *Principles of Psychology*, Herbert Spencer offered an evolutionary account of “the genesis of nerves,” in which he first described “the process by which, among other tissues, nerve-tissue arises out of that protoplasm composing the undifferentiated organism.”⁶² He then accounted for how incipient nervous channels or lines of discharge became more specialized through habit and use, resulting in a more complex nervous “network.”⁶³ Using the metaphor of water currents, Spencer argued that a “wave of change” flows over an organism, and as with the movement of water “over a surface offering no distinct course,” currents will arise and form pathways: “the development of nerve results from the passage of motion along the lines of least resistance.”⁶⁴ Molecules adjust according to excitation and stimulation, and will modify themselves in locations where there is greater exposure and disturbance according to a “wave of molecular motion.”⁶⁵ According to Spencer’s model, which went on to become a popular account of nerve genesis, the nerves that carried impulses around a nervous network were *formed by* those impulses.⁶⁶ Nerve (structure) and neurility (process), in Lewes’s terms, are inseparable: the nerve is “the workshop of a development of force,” but that force can, by repetition,

⁶² Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (New York: Appleton, 1897), 512.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 552.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 512; 515; 519. Although Lewes, too, would stress the importance of nerve *force*, he objected to Spencer’s insistence that function is the *cause* of structure. See Lewes, *Physical*, 71-73

⁶⁵ Spencer, 523.

⁶⁶ For the impact of Spencer’s account of the evolution of nerves, see Romanes “Evolution of Nerves and Nerve-Systems.”

“cut a pathway” to produce new channels for that force to flow.⁶⁷ According to Victorian physiology, then, the form of the human body and its nervous system is a mobile network of forces, plastic in its ability to adapt to stimulation and to the demands of the environment.

If physiologists used the dynamic properties of a network to rethink the form of a single organism – indeed of a human being – Charles Darwin used a mobile network of interconnections to describe the interdependency of multiple organisms, and ultimately all of biological life. Physiology and Darwinian evolutionary theory converge as Darwin produces a network of networks; each physiological network existed as part of successively larger networks that eventually included all of biological life. Although he never used the term in his published works, “net-work” does appear in the unpublished “big species book” he was writing before he published his shorter *On the Origin of Species*. In this earlier manuscript, Darwin writes of “all nature being bound together in an inextricable net-work of relations.”⁶⁸ A few pages later, he replaces the term “net-work” with the concept of a “web” – “All nature is bound together by an inextricable web of relations” – a term that would recur in the published *Origin*: “plants and animals, most remote in the scale of nature, are bound together by a web of complex relations.”⁶⁹ Where physiologists took the agency that for centuries had been centered in a soul or autonomous mind and relocated it to a plastic and decentralized network of nerves, Darwin took the agency that had been associated with a divine creator and distributed it among the complex processes by which organisms affect one another.

⁶⁷ Lewes, *Physiology*, 18; 58.

⁶⁸ Charles Darwin, *Charles Darwin's Natural Selection; Being the Second Part of His Big Species Book Written from 1856 to 1858*, ed. R.C. Stauffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 267.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 271; Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 58.

Darwin's "entangled" network is a site of "war between insect and insect – between insects, snails, and other animals... all striving to increase, and all feeding on each other."⁷⁰ Within this natural warzone, carefully-balanced dependencies emerge, so that "certain flowers" in a district require "the presence of a feline animal" in the same district, since those flowers need fertilization from bees, which depend upon a scarcity of field-mice, whose numbers are, in turn, controlled by cats.⁷¹ The nodes in a Darwinian network or web are consequently formed through their vital connections to other nodes. Darwin writes about the network as both a set of material influences over time and as a trans-temporal collapsing of history into one vast, self-perpetuating system or "inextricable web of affinities."⁷² As a natural historian, he retrospectively thinks of natural selection as a set of determined laws, but these laws are in fact the constantly changing principles of a dynamic system in which each organism acts upon and reacts to others according to its immanent needs. Darwin's network is just as plastic and self-generating as those conceived by Victorian physiologists.

IV. The Novel as Network

Mutual influences between Darwin and Dickens have provided abundant material for criticism of Victorian literature and science, including pioneering work by Gillian Beer and George Levine. For the most part, however, this critical trend has set Dickens's interest in and metaphorical use of scientific principles against his construction of character – against the individual psychology of characters who "imply

⁷⁰ Ibid., 59-60.

⁷¹ Ibid., 59.

⁷² Ibid., 319.

real presences, essential, ideal, and definable beings."⁷³ Attending to Dickens's use of network form reveals a different relation between the novel and science, one that offers an alternative explanation for how the Victorian novel could construct the social and psychological dimensions of character. *Our Mutual Friend* experiments with a social life transformed by the networks of physiological and evolutionary theory; it modifies the scientific net-work in the creative form of fiction. Victorian science used the concept of net-work to imagine the multiple kinds of agency at work in a biological system.

Dickens's novels enact network form in much the same way by handing over narrative agency to impersonal forces that produce interactions between characters. This is a model of sociality with roots in the Kantian recognition that the more complex social life becomes, the less plausible it is to offer a complete account of its workings from the point of view of individual intention.⁷⁴ In *Our Mutual Friend* vitality and action emerge not from within some psychological core, but through the processes that set characters into core-altering collisions with one another.

Take Eugene Wrayburn, for instance. Passive and indifferent to the point of ineffectuality, Eugene wanders aimlessly through the novel until he is attracted to Lizzie Hexam, repelled by Bradley Headstone, or scolded by Jenny Wren. Without these

⁷³ George Levine, "Dickens and Darwin, Science, and Narrative Form," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 28 no. 3 (1986): 271. What he calls the "concept of 'character'" remains in Levine's reading inviolably married to psychological depth; he argues that character always implies the "ideal essence" of a single self, and although he identifies a "growing uncertainty" about this notion of a self in Dickens, he concludes that Dickens's "commitment to 'character'... makes his world in this respect feel very un-Darwinian" (273).

⁷⁴ See Kant's "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," 1784, in which he argues that "human actions, are determined in accordance with natural laws," and that a true history would examine "the human will on a large scale." For Kant, the goal was an account of history in which "what strikes us in the actions of individuals as confused and fortuitous may be recognised, in the history of the entire species, as a steadily advancing but slow development of man's original capacities." Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a University History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," in *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 17.

interactions he is unable to act at all: "I don't design anything," he insists. "I have no design whatever. I am incapable of designs" (294). In the place of his own will or design, Eugene acts "day by day and bit by bit" as his circumstances demand (537). Even Eugene's pursuit of Lizzie is described as an involuntary attraction rather than a consequence of either sympathetic identification or sexual desire, as it is usually portrayed. Indeed, even that most personal of mental functions – his thoughts – are initiated by forces outside himself:

The rippling of the river seemed to cause a correspondent stir in his uneasy reflections. He would have laid them asleep if he could, but they were in movement, like the stream, and all tending one way with a strong current. As the ripple under the moon broke unexpectedly now and then... so parts of his thoughts started, unbidden, from the rest, and revealed their wickedness. (698)

In this shifting metaphor, which strangely binds consciousness to the natural force of the river, emphasis is placed on Eugene's lack of control over "unbidden" thoughts. Like an environmental current beyond his control, Lizzie's influence produces "wicked" thoughts in Eugene that cause him to attribute his actions to happenstance rather than intention: "I happen to be originally brought into contact with you... I happen to be able to promise you... I happen to be able to give you..." (237). Bradley Headstone triggers another type of response in Eugene: idle curiosity and amusement. Followed by Bradley through the streets of London, Eugene intends no specific outcome, but, animal-like, "enjoy[s] the pleasures of the chase" (543).

We might sorely misread Bradley and Eugene, neither of whom is morally admirable, if we see them as conventional characters with individual agency and therefore responsibility for their actions. *Our Mutual Friend* shows us the social and physiological forces that bring about these characters' actions and mete out their

punishments. The flaws the novel exposes in them – useless gentility, irresponsibility, idle curiosity in Eugene; pride, jealousy, anger in Bradley – it shows to be the result of impulses beyond their control. By offering a nosebleed as the answer to a question about what Bradley intends to do next, for instance, the novel associates his lack of control over his decisions with his lack of control over his body. Asked by Riderhood about his future intentions, Bradley loses self-containment: “a great spurt of blood burst from his nose. ‘How does that happen?’ asked Riderhood. ‘I don’t know. I can’t keep it back. It has happened twice – three times – four times – I don’t know how many times – since last night. I taste it, smell it, see it, it chokes me, and then it breaks out like this’” (637-38). Bradley’s jealous reaction to Eugene is a physical symptom he “can’t keep... back.” These characters’ actions and inactions are bound to impulses that direct their minds and their bodies. Without excusing their moral failures, the novel nevertheless makes clear that these characters’ faults are functional characteristics of their social and physiological constitutions.

After Eugene suffers an attack at the hands of Bradley, his character is reworked – literally re-formed – in relation to Lizzie and Jenny Wren. Betraying the novel’s tendency to disrupt any stability of self, Eugene pleads with them to “keep me here... prevent my wandering away I don’t know where... I shall lose myself again” (737). Unable to exert control even over his own presence, he attributes that agency to Lizzie’s influence: “when you see me wandering away again... speak to me by name, and I think I shall come back” (753). He finds in Lizzie the “energy” he has lacked (to the point of detesting the word itself [20]) and complains that she exerts an influence over him without intending to do so: “I don’t complain that you design to keep me here. But you do it, you do it” (691). Lizzie’s actions are similarly compelled by influences outside her

will. She is attracted to Eugene despite complaining that he will “drive me away” (693), and she is similarly influenced by environmental forces: “To please myself, I could not be too far from the river,” she tells her brother. “I can’t get away from it, I think... It’s no purpose of mine that I live by it still” (228).

Both Lizzie and Eugene recognize that their actions are rooted not in individual agency or intention, but in forces they locate in each other or in external stimuli. The type of social life Dickens imagines in this novel anticipates Norbert Elias’s mid-twentieth-century sociology, in which human agency and psychology are products of a network of social interdependencies. Elias described a *Verflechtungsmechanismus*, or “mechanism of interweaving,” in which society is a dynamic network of unintended, constantly changing relational and processual human interactions in which social processes shape people’s psychic lives. The agency of all human actions is “prescribed and limited” by “the autonomous laws of the human network from which [a member’s] actions arise and into which they are directed.”⁷⁵ Characters react to one another to form a network of influences much as the natural interrelation of flower, bee, mouse, and cat produces Darwin’s web or even as the vitalistic branching of elements operates in the rhizomatic model of life that philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari extrapolated from Darwin.⁷⁶ There is, however, a crucial difference between these literary and ecological networks. The vitality that Darwin locates in biological life and describes as mutual dependencies between already living things, Dickens locates in social life and imagines as a property of interaction between all objects.

⁷⁵ Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals* (London: Continuum, 2001), 49; 50.

⁷⁶ See Deleuze and Guattari on the interrelation (deterritorialization and reterritorialization) of the orchid and the wasp. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 10.

In *Our Mutual Friend* any entity that can impact or exert an influence over another form has the potential to come to life as a result of that interaction. The “heterogeneous objects” in Mr. Venus’s shop are therefore “animated” by way of the strange company they keep: “the babies – Hindoo, African, and British – the ‘human warious,’ the French gentleman, the green-glass-eyed cats, the dogs, the ducks, and all the rest of the collection, show for an instant as if paralytically animated” (85).⁷⁷ Architectural spaces come to life in reaction to the people who inhabit them, so that Gaffer Hexam’s home, with its “look of decomposition,” has “a rotten wart of wood upon its forehead” (21), and the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters becomes “a tavern of a dropsical appearance... long settled down into a state of hale infirmity” (61). Both spaces have caught the moral and physical ailments of their inhabitants. Similarly, the life of the city’s buildings appears to merge into the life of its population, so that just as the city’s population suffers the effects of urban pollution, “Animate London, with smarting eyes and irritated lungs, was blinking, wheezing, and choking” (420). The same principle produces life in the most recalcitrant of material forms: Wegg’s amputated leg refuses to “fit” in an articulated skeleton, while his wooden leg takes control of his body: “he was so wooden a man that he seemed to have taken his wooden leg naturally, and rather suggested to the fanciful observer, that he might be expected – if his development received no untimely check – to be completely set up with a pair of wooden legs in about six months” (46).

In the 1950s, Dorothy Van Ghent famously read this perverse animation of things as an exchange or reversal between humans and objects, inviting generations of critics to

⁷⁷ This strange collection equates raced bodies and animals with non-life, and it marks their de-animation and re-animation through disability (paralysis), as part of the curiosity shop.

read the strange vitality of Dickens's city as a type of fetishism.⁷⁸ Van Ghent implies that Dickens's animation of objects involves a de-animation of people, "as if the life absorbed by things had been drained out of people who have become incapable of their humanity."⁷⁹ But if Dickens's characters at times appear no more complex than his personified objects, this is because his objects and his characters both participate in a social life animated by combination. When Van Ghent echoes Forster in describing the Dickens novel as "a universe that is nervous throughout, a universe in which nervous ganglia stretch through both people and their external environment," she draws on a metaphor that inadvertently shows how Dickens adapted physiological mechanisms of life to imagine the interactions between people and objects that characterizes Victorian London.⁸⁰

Roberto Esposito, in an entirely different context, explains this exchange of person and property by way of reference to what he calls the Lockean "appropriative procedure." Esposito argues that Locke's "personification of the thing," whereby an object is incorporated into the body of its proprietor, "lends itself to be interpreted as the reification of the person."⁸¹ The result is more literal and radical than even Marx indicated in his essay on the commodity fetish, where people and things remain distinguished from one another for Marx even after things come to dominate their

⁷⁸ See, for instance, Ivan Kreilkamp's claim that "[t]he logic of Dickens's technique might be described as that of the commodity fetish, under the spell of which things and people become, as commodities, exchangeable and indistinguishable." *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 195.

⁷⁹ Dorothy Van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todger's," *The Sewanee Review* 58.3 (1950), 420.

⁸⁰ Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Rinehart, 1953), 132.

⁸¹ Roberto Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 69.

owners. What Esposito terms the “reciprocal subjection” between person and thing means that object and person give life to one another:

[I]f the appropriated thing depends on the subject who possesses it such that it becomes one with the body, the owner in turn is rendered as such only by the thing that belongs to him – and therefore he himself depends upon it... Without an appropriating subject, no appropriated thing. But without any appropriated thing, no appropriating subject.⁸²

According to Esposito, the object becomes subject and the subject becomes object, each one rendering the other, and producing both as a single living object. Dickens takes this type of reciprocal vitality one step further by removing it from the realm of both Darwin’s biological system and the commodity market and making it the condition of an urban world that makes little distinction between things and people. All objects – *including* people – appropriate one another, attempt to exploit one another, make use of one another, or prey upon one another. Dickens’s social network is also an economic network.

In extending a social network beyond purely biological systems, Dickens’s novels capitalized on the potential of what Lewes and Darwin called net-work to rethink form itself – its shape, configuration, constitution – as something plastic and in process with many different mutable hubs: a “continuous net-work of variable forms.”⁸³ But where Lewes and Darwin saw a network as a way of describing biological systems, Dickens took the formative capability of network a step further when his novels reconceived the serial production of fiction as a way of opening up narrative to chance and, with chance, to novelty, rather than as the imposition of constraints in the novel’s

⁸² Ibid., 67.

⁸³ Lewes, *Physical*, 155. The Oxford English Dictionary offers multiple definitions for form, including: “I. Shape, arrangement of parts”; “4.a.... The essential determinant principle of a thing”; “5.a. The particular character, nature, structure, or constitution of a thing; the particular mode in which a thing exists or manifests itself.”

world-making power. Dickens's serial form performed a net-work that put the elements of a social system in motion, endowing them with the curious energy that so puzzled E.M. Forster. In this sense, Dickens uses the network as an experimental method. The unfolding of his monthly novels in serial parts allows us to see the network in process, particularly when read alongside Dickens's working notes. Although Victorian sciences seized upon the plasticity of network form to describe biological life, scientific methods of inquiry were increasingly systematized and constrained by an emphasis on "objectivity."⁸⁴ In contrast, serial fiction offered a flexible formal mode for creating and experimenting with a network of social life.

Writing fiction serially allowed Dickens to experiment by trying out combinations of characters and making alterations in response to changing circumstances during serial publication. He began these experiments in his working notes by asking, and then returning to answer, questions about which characters to bring together. Early installments of the novel put in motion a system of social circulation within which new characters are identified as they encounter others. The time lapse between installments meant the novel could change direction in response to feedback from readers, reviewers, and sales figures, as well as Dickens's real-life encounters. We know, for instance, that Dickens introduced Mr. Venus into *Our Mutual Friend* when he needed material to replace the too-lengthy chapter 7 featuring the Lammles' marriage, which he moved to chapter 10. In characteristic phrasing that locates agency in the novel rather than its author, Dickens told his illustrator Marcus Stone that "he had a personage who had just appeared upon the scene who was to have

⁸⁴ For more on the emphasis on objectivity in Victorian science, see George Levine, *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

some eccentric calling, and that he could not find the calling that would suit him.”⁸⁵

Stone took Dickens to see a taxidermist in London, “an articulator of skeletons, a stuffer of birds, and dealer in bottled monsters”⁸⁶ This real-life detour resulted in Mr. Venus’s appearance in the second installment.⁸⁷ Serial literary production altered the system. Similarly, F.X Shea has argued that Dickens’s original plan was to make the Veneerings and the Lammles responsible for swindling the Boffinses out of their inheritance rather than Wegg. While Shea attributes this change to Dickens’s “haste and precipitancy,” Jennifer Hayward, correctly, I believe, sees it as a response to the public’s lack of enthusiasm for the Veneerings and their amusement at Wegg and Venus.⁸⁸ The responsiveness of the serial to its readership allowed the novel to incorporate adjustments to its form.

Despite what appears to be Dickens’s careful management of his installments and the alterations he made while writing, he repeatedly described his work as shaped not by his authorial decisions nor by some transcendent fatalism, but by serial form itself.⁸⁹ He might boast in his postscript about hiding information from the reader but, in

⁸⁵ Quoted in Michael Cotsell, *The Companion to Our Mutual Friend* (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2013), 65.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See Slater, 524-25; Francis Xavier Shea, “Mr. Venus Observed: The Plot Change in Our Mutual Friend,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 4 (1968), 170; Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to the Soap Opera* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997): 175-77.

⁸⁸ Shea, “Mr. Venus Observed,” 60-62. These adjustments were by no means limited to *Our Mutual Friend*. The most notable example of Dickens’s alterations during serial writing was his change to the ending of *Great Expectations*, which he changed from a subdued ending to a more romantic and happy one in response to a conversation with Edward Bulwer Lytton. See Slater, 494-95.

⁸⁹ This is to contrast Dickens’s “experimental novel” with the concept as used by Emile Zola. For Dickens, human life is social, adaptable, and contextual rather than rigidly determinist. For Zola, the experimental (naturalist) novelist (his example is Balzac) “interferes in a direct way to place his character in certain conditions, and of these he remains the master” (9). The outcome of this combination of character and condition will always conform to the “absolute determinism” of

light of his usual tendency to re-frame novels as whole self-contained forms after serial publication, Dickens's retroactive claim of authorial control does little to undermine the self-generating principles of the novel's serial form. Nor does the claim of authorial control fit with Dickens's descriptions of his writing practice in personal letters. "I don't invent it," Dickens wrote to his friend and biographer John Forster, "[I] *see it*, and write it down."⁹⁰ In what might be read as an explanation of the passivity of his authorial act, Dickens offered the following advice in a letter to Wilkie Collins: "my own effort would be to strike more of what is got... out of [characters] by collision with one another, and by the working of the story."⁹¹ Here Dickens transfers agency from himself to the inherent properties of his narrative. He can bring characters together in certain combinations, but the collisions and reactions that result are due to the "working of the story." Much like Darwin's natural historiography, Dickens's network of social relation unfolds according to internally consistent laws of attraction and repulsion.

human phenomena (18), and as a result the novelist will extend the work of the physiologist to "solve scientifically the question of how men behave when they are in society" (21). My use of the term "experimental" to describe Dickens novels is, on the contrary, meant to describe a formal procedure by which Dickens hands over certain aspects of his novel's work to form itself, to a certain set of laws, which I explain as affects. "The Experimental Novel," In *The Experimental Novel And Other Essays*, trans. Belle Sherman (New York: Haskell House, 1964).

⁹⁰ Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 3.340. This is the hallucinatory author that Lewes describes in explaining Dickens's writing as a physiological rather than an intellectual endeavor. Peter Logan has recently referred to Lewes's interest in Dickens's hallucinatory authorship as initiating a long critical tradition of reading Dickens's imagination as reified. Logan shows the extent to which Lewes's articulation of Dickens's creative process was influenced by Auguste Comte on primitivism, particularly on the notion that primitives had an unfettered imagination. Paper presented at the North American Victorian Studies Association Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 2012.

⁹¹ *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Madeline House and Graham Storey, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), Jan 7, 1860.

V. Network and Affect

When Eugene Wrayburn insists that Lizzie Hexam's physical presence in a room will bring him back to life, he implies that her influence bypasses his mind and works in and through both their bodies. Characters react to one another involuntarily; they are attracted or attractive, repelled or repulsive. This is affect. Unlike sentiment or emotion it works compulsively, overriding individual will, family affection, and sympathy for deserving strangers – the primarily modes of character motivation in the novel form Dickens inherited from Richardson and Austen.⁹² Dickens uses the open-endedness of serial publication to imagine social life as a self-generating network, but he uses the involuntary responses that prompt his characters' actions and reactions to create a formal organizing principle for otherwise open narrative possibilities. By bringing characters into "collision with one another," the novel's social dynamics transform sympathy into an attraction that can be reconciled with what Victorian science described as the physiological mechanisms of life.

Raymond Williams has remarked that, in Dickens's novels, "men and women do not so much relate as pass each other and then sometimes collide."⁹³ To "relate" would imply the type of interaction posited by Adam Smith's eighteenth-century model of sympathy, a complex cognitive process that involves imagining oneself in the position of another. Smith's mind-centered theory of mutual identification and evaluation reaffirms

⁹² I draw my usage of affect here from two strands of affect theory. The first arises from Silvan Tompkins and stresses the psychobiology of affect. The second, rooted in the work of Deleuze via Spinoza, locates affect in the pre-personal and interpersonal, in the midst of relations. Gregg and Seigworth note that "affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body... in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves." Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," *The Affect Theory Reader*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

⁹³ Williams, 155.

two individuals' separate, autonomous selfhood.⁹⁴ We might draw analogies from the physical properties of electricity or magnetism to explain how affect operates to put anything remotely like Smith's version of sympathy in the service of impersonal forces of interaction between characters.⁹⁵ When, for example, Bella Wilfer visits Lizzie Hexam she finds herself initially noting Lizzie's "shade of sadness" and trying to understand what might have caused it (518). But this emotional identification is quickly translated into attraction, a "pleasure" associated with "looking at" each other (523). Lizzie finds Bella "captivating." "[Lizzie] has the same interest in you that you have in her," explains Rokesmith, interpreting their interaction, "Just as you are attracted by her beaut—by her appearance and manner, she is attracted by yours" (519). Bella is certainly influenced by her encounter with Lizzie; she will be "shame[d]" by the contrast between the two of them (528). But the novel figures that influence as a sudden affect rather than a deep-seated emotional identification between two autonomous individuals. Bella can recognize Lizzie's "unselfish passion," but she cannot truly sympathize with her because "she had never experienced anything like it, or thought of the existence of anything like it" (528).

The novel's most extreme example of involuntary affect – Bradley Headstone's attraction to Lizzie – completely bypasses conscious command. "You draw me to you,"

⁹⁴ In his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smith describes sympathy as an act of the imagination. We imagine another's circumstances as if they were our own, producing a fellow feeling that can only mirror the other person's feeling. The experience of feeling sympathy for another person necessitates an intellectual leap that crosses over a threshold of difference, cementing the separation of two individuals. For Smith, sympathy is therefore an individual and an individuating process.

⁹⁵ Barri J. Gold explicitly employs such a view of energy in Dickens's literary world when she shows how *Bleak House* comes to work like an engine producing entropy. I share with Gold an interest in how fiction participated in the process of developing theories we understand as scientific. *ThermoPoetics: Energy in Victorian Literature and Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

he claims, "I love you. What other men may mean when they use that expression, I cannot tell; what *I* mean is, that I am under the influence of some tremendous attraction which I have resisted in vain, and which overmasters me" (397). Bradley describes Lizzie's influence as an environmental force: "To me, you brought it; on me, you forced it; and the bottom of this raging sea... has been heaved up ever since" (396). This is much more than metaphor; Bradley indicates that his life has become physically determined by Lizzie's presence. Where Lizzie attracts almost everyone without ever meaning to do so, Bradley does the opposite, repelling all but the unfortunate Miss Peecher. The social life Dickens produces in *Our Mutual Friend* puts into practice what he describes in his previous monthly city novel, *Little Dorrit*, as a system of social interactions in which people are always "coming and going so strangely, to meet and to act and to react on one another" (22).

Such circumscribed behavioral responses are most explicit in so-called "minor" characters – indeed, the inflexibility of compulsive actions and reactions may distinguish the minor from major roles in Dickens's narratives. Ruled by tics and peculiar proclivities that help us recognize them over nineteenth months, these characters have severely limited powers to respond to others. Jenny Wren and Sloppy, for instance, both exhibit such strange physical characteristics – Jenny in her peculiar doll-like gait and her "bright and watchful" eye (347), and Sloppy with his "incomprehensible buttons" (323) and his contorted body – that they tend to astonish or alarm others, including the reader. This aggressive singularity determines how these characters will interact: Rogue Riderhood will alienate everyone he comes into contact with; Wegg will exploit everyone; Jenny Wren will care for or punish everyone. Unlike a type or stock character, Dickens's minor characters display what George Henry Lewes, in his 1872 article on

Dickens, described as a repetitive physiological vividness: “[*David Copperfield’s* Micawber is] always... moved with the same springs, and uttering the same sounds... always crushed and rebounding, always making punch.”⁹⁶ What Forster defined as flatness, and what Alex Woloch identifies as the compression of characters into roles that nevertheless imply the presence of a rounded person, I interpret as an alternative version of character psychology.⁹⁷ Dickens’s people are characterized not by implied psychological roundedness but by physiological responsiveness to social interaction. By offering so many distinctive minor characters, Dickens in effect takes the variations one expects to find within a rounded character and disperses them among clusters of characters.

Since Dickens’s world is populated by characters animated by involuntary reactions and repulsions, the network of *Our Mutual Friend* works much like Darwin’s network – his “entangled bank” – in which multiple heterogeneous organisms act on, react to, and change one another as they compete for limited resources.⁹⁸ In constructing what he labels (with an important capital letter) “Society,” Dickens uses an unrelenting human desire for excessive amounts of money, real estate, and useless pieces of furniture to ramp up and critique the negative effects of a mechanism like natural selection. In its own alarming brand of Social Darwinism, the novel creates a social life in which characters respond to and use one another for social advancement. The Podsnaps gather acquaintances like pieces of plate; the Veneerings attract and make use

⁹⁶ Lewes, “Dickens,” 148.

⁹⁷ My reading differs slightly from Woloch’s account of minorness, in which he reads the presence of a “full person behind every minor character” and an “implied human being who gets constricted into a delimited role.” Alex Woloch, *The One Vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 152, 40.

⁹⁸ Darwin, *Origin*, 59.

of their “friends” to advance their social and political status; and when the Boffins inherit money they become surrounded by social predators. From the glittering parlors of the Veneering set to the muddy shores of the Thames where Rogue Riderhood and Gaffer Hexam dredge the water for bodies, Dickens’s city turns acquisitive habits into naturalized affects so that the desire for advancement becomes second nature. That social relationships look so much like natural selection in Dickens’s world is owing to this compulsive nature of acquisitive desire. Social affect can override basic attractions, which is why Eugene cannot consider marrying Lizzie and Bella refuses John’s proposal when she thinks he has no money. The compulsive nature of social affect is also why we can easily believe the novel’s ruse that Mr. Boffin has been transformed into a miser by his sudden encounter with money, and why Dickens can reveal this to be untrue when he also reveals that the Boffins knew all along that the money was not theirs.

Given the impersonal dynamic that puts its city in motion, how does *Our Mutual Friend* manage to produce what we recognize as love within a network of attractions and repulsions? Although the novel ends with two marriages, we would be wrong to assume that the unions of Bella to John and Eugene to Lizzie replicate the type of sentimental ending we attribute to, say, Jane Austen, and by way of Austen to the novel in general. For these marriages cannot be products of educated individual choice or sympathetic identification – not if they arise out of the same affective mechanisms as the competitive and reactive relationships that set the novel in motion. The end of a serial novel obviously poses a problem for Dickens. How can he bring to an end an open networked form in a way that does not compromise a novel’s self-generating operations? The solution is to rework the marriage plot, which traditionally requires a conclusion that morally validates sympathetic relations and that uses that moral

validation to justify a teleological drive toward closure. What is remarkable about the ending of *Our Mutual Friend* is that it produces what might conventionally be considered “good” marriages not by imposing or naturalizing a set of morals as the explicatory goal for the novel, but rather by working through the physical properties of cohesion, much like the positive nature of magnetic attraction. The novel reconciles the basic physiological responses of attraction with the “good choice” of a marriage partner, thereby reworking morality to reconcile it with those behaviors that Lewes and Darwin were showing to be physiological, biological, or “natural.”

Eugene Wrayburn’s transformation and marriage to Lizzie Hexam offers us a case in point. When the novel shows us how “his wife had changed” Eugene, it enacts a re-formation of character that is inseparable from the physical alteration he suffers at the hands of his would-be murderer, Bradley (294). Before his attack, Eugene attributes his inability to marry Lizzie to his general distaste for marriage and its likeliness to render him “bored” (147; 697). Though desperate to be with her, Eugene, with his lack of “energy” and intention, cannot pursue a relationship that conflicts with the principles governing the system of social relations as a whole: “he was not of her station, and to marry her was not in his mind” (430). Passively embedded in “Society,” Eugene can only think of Lizzie in exploitative terms; he wishes to possess her as an object, but he is unable to act against a social system that would not facilitate his union with the penniless daughter of a river-dredger. He finds himself unable to act, caught between his social affects and his attraction to Lizzie: “‘Out of the question to marry her,’ said Eugene, ‘and out of the question to leave her. The crisis!’” (698).

The novel re-forms Eugene not by a moral reformation in which he can learn to love Lizzie despite her social status (he already does) or by unblocking repressed desire

(he is altogether conscious of his desire), but by placing him in a violent interaction with Bradley Headstone and thus taking the crisis out of his hands. Bradley's affective response to Eugene is so negative that the two quite literally cannot occupy the same novel; Bradley must eliminate his rival and, failing that, kill himself. The end of the novel's eighteenth installment therefore brings Eugene to the brink of death. "One of the strongest features of the story," Dickens had said to Marcus Stone, "will be the death of Eugene Wrayburn after the assault by the schoolmaster. I think it will be one of the best things I have ever done."⁹⁹ But instead of killing Eugene, the attack puts him into a new kind of interaction with Lizzie. In his working notes for this installment, Dickens wrote a line for Eugene at the end of his chapter plans: "I think upon the whole I had better die, my dear."¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in Dickens's planning note on the opposite side of the page we find: "'I hope I should amend, if I recovered,' says Eugene, 'but I am afraid I shouldn't!'" Both of these notes suggest that at this point Dickens was still following his original plan to kill Eugene. The last clause in particular suggests Eugene's death is imminent and that we will never know whether he amended. The counterfactual conditional phrasing of this second note signifies Eugene's lack of agency over any hypothetical amendment of his character. But in the novel this language has changed: "There is a sharp misgiving in my conscience that if I were to live, I should disappoint your good opinion and my own—and that I ought to die, my dear!" (754). This counterfactual conditional ("if I were to live...I should disappoint") is preceded by a predicative conditional: "If I live, you'll find me out... I humbly hope it" (754). Still underscoring Eugene's lack of agency over his re-formation of character, this new phrase, which appears on the final page of the

⁹⁹ Quoted in Frederic George Kitton, *Dickens and His Illustrators* (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 197.

¹⁰⁰ *Dickens' Working Notes*, 369.

penultimate installment, keeps open a set of possibilities for recovery without foreclosing the options available before the next installment.¹⁰¹

In the process of writing Eugene's attack, Dickens evidently found a way to keep Eugene alive without violating the mechanisms of his novel form or its model of social life. Bradley is driven to kill Eugene to remove the attraction between Lizzie and his rival, but the attack only removes the impediment to this attraction when Lizzie saves Eugene from drowning. Violence begets its opposite because it removes Eugene's "crisis" or "question" of how to act. Stripped down to the basic mechanisms of survival and attraction, Eugene finds that he needs Lizzie "at his side, for he never got on well without her" (811). This relationship is based on the same principle of attraction that governs the novel's ruthlessly exploitative social system, but the novel finds a way to make their attraction exceed the utilitarian objectives of economic survival and social advancement. *Our Mutual Friend* unleashes the negative implications of Social Darwinism but leaves open the potential for a positively charged affect to emerge, an affect capable of creating cohesive sociability manifested as love and caregiving. When moral goodness emerges in this novel, it appears not as a virtue learned by an individual in the face of an otherwise acquisitive world, but as a positive affect brought about by fortuitous interactions between characters who tend towards positive rather than negative reactions.

In Bella Wilfer the novel produces a similar re-formation of character by altering her affective reactions. Even if we acknowledge the deliberate plans concocted by the Boffins and Rokesmith to transform Bella Wilfer into a self-sacrificing, moral, domestic

¹⁰¹ The eighteenth installment, comprising chapters 8-11 of the fourth book, was published in October of 1865, followed the next month by the final double (nineteenth and twentieth) installment.

woman, we must recognize that they use the same narrative means the novel uses to redirect Eugene's desire – a violent confrontation that strips her down to her basic impulses. Faced with the spectacle of John Rokesmith's mistreatment at the hands of the supposedly miserly Mr. Boffin, Bella comes to feel differently about the thing she has always wanted: "money, money, money, and what money can make of life!" (460). Witnessing a scene staged for her benefit in which Mr. Boffin accuses John of insolence for proposing to her despite his lack of money, Bella reacts to her own "avaricious" behavior with shame and disgust, affects she manifests physically: "Bella hung her head and seemed to shrink a little from Mr. Boffin's protecting arm... covering her face with her hands" (603; 590).¹⁰² Pressed further, Bella's shame gives way to childish, almost animalistic physicality. Reenacting the childhood tantrum in which she expressed selfish desire by "stamping [her] little foot... and screaming with [her] little voice" (42), the novel uses Bella's rudimentary impulses to cancel out and redirect her attraction to money. Once again she again "cr[ies] out in a wild way"; "stamp[s]... her little foot"; lets loose "an incoherent passion of tears"; and with "great expenditure of force" she "hysterically laugh[s] and crie[s] together" (597). This no-less compulsive reaction to her former compulsive behavior transforms her earlier response to the very thought of poverty into an "unselfish passion" for John (528).

Our Mutual Friend makes possible its positive relationships between Eugene and Lizzie, Bella and John, not by educating Eugene and Bella to make choices that go

¹⁰² See Silvan Tomkins on shame: "The shame response is an act which reduces facial communication... By dropping his eyes, his eyelids, his head, and sometimes the whole upper part of his body, the individual calls a halt to looking at another person, particularly the other person's face, and to the other person's looking at him, particularly at his face." *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 134.

against their social systems and former inclinations, but in much the same way that Darwin finds the potential for unpredictable attractions between animals within the larger system of natural selection. In his 1871 *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Darwin would introduce a positive principle of selection – sexual selection – as both a complement and an alternative to the aggressively competitive mechanism of natural selection by which all organisms strive to “survive in the struggle for existence.”¹⁰³ While he insists that, “in most cases... it is impossible to distinguish between the effects of natural and sexual selection,” in that frequently they both work towards reproductive fitness, Darwin nevertheless goes to great lengths to make this distinction.¹⁰⁴ Natural selection situates the fate of all organisms within a struggle that weeds out those less fit to survive, but the selection of those survivors whom females find most attractive as mates determines who will succeed in producing their kind. However, sexual selection also introduces an alternative and often competing desire into the narrative of evolution when Darwin speculates that the females of the species choose the most suitable mate based upon unpredictable mechanisms of sensual appeal. Because sexual selection “depends on so fluctuating an element as taste,” Darwin insists, it exceeds the utilitarian principle of natural selection that ensures the survival of the fittest competitor.¹⁰⁵ Sexual selection not only operates on the male as an external force but also operates through the female in a manner that resembles individual choice.

The attraction between Lizzie and Eugene and between Bella and John introduces a principle into the novel’s social life that operates much like Darwin’s sexual selection – an affect that remains impulsive but that is particular to single characters.

¹⁰³ *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: Penguin, 2004), 244.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 554.

According to Darwin, natural selection means that all organisms desire what is biologically beneficial for them (or, more specifically, for their offspring, and therefore for the species), making individual desire and action a product of environmental and physiological mechanisms that work across whole populations. While sexual selection is also involuntary and physiological, and while it can have practical benefits in introducing variations upon which natural selection can then operate, it is not subservient to the utilitarian system of survival. As Elizabeth Grosz points out, sexual selection has the potential to generate particularity and introduce chance into Darwin's theory of natural selection, since its operations of "taste, appeal, and aesthetics are fundamentally irrational and unpredictable forces."¹⁰⁶ It finds a place in the struggle for survival for the single organism's pleasures and sensations.

Despite the impersonality of the fitness that elsewhere determines which forms of life survive, Darwin repeatedly uses the term "choice" in *Descent* to describe sexual selection, obliging us to pay attention to choice as an element of Darwin's system that implicitly contradicts its mechanisms. While sexual selection sometimes depends "on the will, choice, and rivalry of the individuals of either sex" in a species, it can also be "unconscious."¹⁰⁷ Thus inconsistently characterized, sexual choice mediates between hardwired biology and conscious deliberation; it lingers on the borders of thought and impulse. Describing sexual selection in birds, Darwin sometimes infers that females have the "mental capacity... for the exertion of a choice," only to turn choice into unwilled desire: female birds "prefer, or are unconsciously excited by the more beautiful

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 141.

¹⁰⁷ Darwin, *Descent*, 245; 416.

males."¹⁰⁸ Hence, the "discrimination and taste" by which "selection" operates are peculiar to the individual organism and expressive of its singularity. Significantly, once Darwin turns his attention to the modern period and "civilized" humans, he finds that "conditions for sexual selection" are less "favourable" than they were during "primordial times."¹⁰⁹ He hypothesizes that the replacement of "instinctive passions" with "foresight and reason" means that civilized humans will make choices based on intellect rather than the unpredictable physiological mechanism of sexual selection. The end of the evolutionary narrative devolves into something akin to a marriage plot in which morality and reason produce a "conclusion" to Darwin's story simply by overcoming the mechanisms of the system he has been narrating.

In the very different arena of fiction and urban social life, *Our Mutual Friend* reworks sentimental love to make it operate much like sexual selection. This is not to suggest that Dickens's novel explicitly adapts Darwin's theory; rather, Darwin's sexual selection offers both a concrete example of one way in which Victorian networked life could produce elements of individuated will, beauty, and aesthetic preference without violating the inherent principles of the same biological, social, or psychological network. Both Darwin and Dickens introduce into a system of perpetual competition a type of choice produced by the system but with the potential to work against or in spite of it. Instead of basing the marriages of its two pairs of lovers on moral reformation and educated sympathy, the novel shows these unions to be products of the very same forces of attraction and reaction that have been at work in this novel all along. It consequently retools a traditional marriage plot in which sentimental love tends to overcome and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 577.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 663.

close down the forces that have prevented the union throughout a novel. The attractions that result in marriage in *Our Mutual Friend* indeed exceed the novel's social affects, but they do not overturn them; they emerge out of and in spite of them. If Dickens's novel forms itself as a network of reactions between characters, its concluding marriages are similarly the results of reactions and re-formations. The difference is that, like sexual selection, the attractions that bring about these marriages have the capacity to produce unexpected social consequences – caregiving and love – out of an otherwise acquisitive social system.

VI. Hallucinatory Dickens

Dickens is by no means the only Victorian novelist to imagine a form of social life in which characters come to life within a vast network. We have only to think of George Eliot's intricate webs of interaction or sensation fiction's nervous bodies. But Dickens's network form is remarkable because it begins with the basic responses of sensory reaction that extend from his characters to his readers and even himself. Lewes identified this distinctive feature in his essay on Dickens when he attributed his writing to the "phenomena of hallucination."¹¹⁰ For Lewes, Dickens's creativity is grounded in sensory experience rather than intellectual thought, so that as readers of his fiction "we could not help... being affected, as it were, by his hallucinations."¹¹¹ Lewes based his conclusions partly on an anecdote from the author himself: "Dickens once declared to me that every word said by his characters was distinctly *heard* by him."¹¹² He concluded

¹¹⁰ Lewes, "Dickens," 149.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 151.

that Dickens was a “unique example of a mind of singular force in which, so to speak, sensations never passed into ideas... Compared with that of Fielding or Thackeray, his was merely an *animal* intelligence.”¹¹³ Lewes offers a serious critique of Dickens’s writing here that is obscured if we assume he is merely pathologizing Dickens and his readers.¹¹⁴ Lewes posits sensory response and intellectual thought as two contradictory but equally potent types of novel reading and writing.

Dickens indeed described his authorship in personal papers as intuitive rather than deliberative. Writing to John Forster about *Martin Chuzzlewit*, he marveled:

As to the way in which these characters have opened out, that is, to me, one of the most surprising processes of the mind in this sort of invention. Given what one knows, what one does not know springs up; and I am as absolutely certain of its being true, as I am of the law of gravitation—if such a thing be possible, more so.¹¹⁵

His phrasing here is indicative of the way he writes about his characters and his novels, as if they act without his guidance: “Some beneficent power shows it all to me... I don’t invent it...” “[I] *see it*, and write it down”; “[my work] has great possession of me... and drags me where it will.”¹¹⁶ Even when Dickens’s referred to his writing as slow and painful work, his emphasis is on a process of testing out ideas that come to him unbidden. In a letter to the Earl of Carlisle in January 1849, he described his process as

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Ibid., 3.340 and 2.156. My reading of Lewes on Dickens differs significantly from Sarah Winter’s interpretation in her recent study of Dickens’s serial fiction. Winter sees Lewes as discrediting and diagnosing Dickens and his readers. My argument about Dickens’s serial form also differs from Winter’s claim that Dickens was engaged in a “project for popularizing serial fiction as a mode of public education.” Reading serial fiction in light of associationist psychology, Winter sees serial reading as an ethical and self-reflexive process. *The Pleasures of Memory: Learning to Read With Charles Dickens* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 6.

¹¹⁵ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 2.80.

¹¹⁶ Although John Forster would take issue with Lewes hallucinatory conclusion for belittling Dickens’s genius, even he admitted that Dickens’s “fancies controlled him... [his] characters are so real as to be treated as existences [and] their creator himself cannot help them having their own wills and ways” (2.151-52).

“one incessant process of *rejection*. I bring it down to that, by working at it very slowly, and with infinite pains – rejecting things, day by day, as they come into my thoughts, and whipping the cream of them” (emphasis original).¹¹⁷ Dickens’s description of unintentional creation and careful rejection sheds new light on his working notes and memoranda book – filled as they are with multiple possibilities, with questions and answers – as texts positioned between intuitive idea and novel installment.

Forster preferred to interpret Dickens’s authorial passivity as a matter of creative imagination and the “sheer force of his genius,”¹¹⁸ so he took issue when Lewes attributed Dickens’s creative method to hallucination, as if Dickens were subject to his creations.¹¹⁹ “Hallucination” was Lewes’s term for a physiological experience, for an imagination in which “images have the vividness of sensations” and the “coercive force of realities, excluding all control.”¹²⁰ Whereas E.M. Forster would conclude half a century later that Dickens’s characters must derive their vitality from Dickens’s individual life, Lewes asks us to see the author functioning much like his characters: operating according to sensory response.¹²¹

Dickens’s serial novels—featuring “flat” characters who nevertheless come to life as we read them – ask us to find a way of explaining the relationship between author

¹¹⁷ Dickens, *Letters*, 5.466.

¹¹⁸ John Forster, 3.341.

¹¹⁹ Of Lewes’s “hallucinative” theory, Forster wrote: “[Dickens] is said on one occasion to have declared to [Lewes] that every word uttered by his characters was distinctly *heard* by him before it was written down. Such an averment, not credible for a moment as thus made, indeed simply untrue to the extent described, may yet be accepted in the limited and quite different sense which a passage in one of Dickens’s letters gives to it. All writers of genius to whom their art has become as a second nature, will be found capable of doing upon occasion what the vulgar may think to be ‘hallucination,’ but hallucination will never account for it” (3.339).

¹²⁰ Lewes, “Dickens,” 145.

¹²¹ Dickens describes his invention as guided by external processes, an intriguing contrast to those early twentieth-century Surrealist practitioners of “automatic writing” such as André Breton, Phillipe Soupault, and Louis Aragon, who saw writing as bypassing conscious control and emerging directly from the artist’s unique subconscious.

and characters and between characters and reader that does not rely upon authorial agency or intellectual influences. Lewes argues that the reader requires no cultural training, no “cultivation,” in order to experience a Dickens novel. His self-confessed object in this essay is to help us understand just why a critic would express “contempt” for Dickens’s work, and yet, “a few minutes afterwards... admit that Dickens had ‘entered into his life.’”¹²² His answer is that Dickens bypasses critical reflection and impacts our senses directly: “we enjoy [Dickens’s novels] like children at play, laughing and crying at the images which pass before us.”¹²³ As Peter Logan has observed, an early critical tradition developed around these supposedly primitive qualities of Dickens’s writing, its association with childish or animal or uncultivated minds.¹²⁴ The implication is that Dickens’s readers, like his characters, experience themselves not as individuals responding to the world via reason and intellect, but rather as nodes in a network of affect and response.

Reading Dickens in light of his novels’ ability to turn characters, readers, and even the writer himself into people who respond physiologically rather than intellectually – with our senses rather than with our minds – requires a type of reading at odds with the detachment and cultivated distance identified by Amanda Anderson as the aspiration of much Victorian aesthetic and intellectual life, an aspiration associated with self-reflexivity, omniscient realism, and impartial objectivity.¹²⁵ The distinction

¹²² Lewes, *Dickens*, 143.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹²⁴ Logan, “Patterns.”

¹²⁵ According to Nicholas Dames, contemporary novel theory has been shaped by such a notion of cultivated detachment, particularly following Percy Lubbock’s insistence that: “So far from losing ourselves in the world of the novel, we must hold it away from us, see it in all detachment, and use the whole of it to make the image we see” (qtd. 33). Dames explains that following Lubbock’s formalist approach, “the job of the critics is *not to read*, but to extract data from the novel that

between sensory and cultivated reading turns upon the immediacy of response to serial form as opposed to the “deferred pleasures” of critical detachment. Dickens’s writing, according to Lewes, offers us “a marked absence of the reflective tendency.”¹²⁶ “Private readers” and “public critics” alike, says Lewes, “were eager to take up each successive number of [Dickens’s] works as it appeared” and would “lay aside books of which they could only speak in terms of eulogy, in order to bury themselves in the ‘new number’ when the well-known green cover made its appearance.”¹²⁷ The books laid aside by these readers are those that prompt “eulogy,” a term that implies a reflective consideration of something no longer alive. Dickens, in contrast, makes use of serial form to offer experience “as it appear[s]”; still unfinished, it is alive – a form-in-process. Reader and writer experience themselves as if they were characters in Dickens’s novel: responsive products of their interactions in a complex and ever-changing social network.

make up mental wholes, to avoid everywhere the temporal flow and affective identifications that infect novel-reading.” Dames, *Physiology*, 34. We might see the apotheosis of this distanced novel reading technique in the work of Moretti’s “distant reading.”

¹²⁶ Lewes, “Dickens,” 151.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

CHAPTER THREE

Sensation and Detection

In the early pages of Wilkie Collins's 1859 sensation novel *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright knows that there must be something significant about the mysterious woman in white he met on a dark London street, that there must be some connection between this woman and his pupil Laura Fairlie. But that knowledge is not available to his attentive mind; it is a sensory knowledge. His mind lags behind his body in recognizing the resemblance between the two women, and his physiological reaction implies a missing narrative about just what they have to do with one another: "[A] sensation, for which I can find no name – a sensation that quickened my pulse, and raised a fluttering at my heart – began to steal over me."¹ Hartright's many efforts at detection, including his compilation of the testimonies that form the novel itself, will revolve around trying to name the very thing "for which [he] can find no name"; he will try to fill in the narrative gap produced by something that is known only by his sensory body. In the same way, in Collins's later novel *The Moonstone* (1868), Franklin Blake's efforts to logically fill in a narrative gap revolve around a limitation in his attentive mind. Blake is determined to discover who stole a diamond from the bedroom of his beloved Rachel Verinder on the night of her birthday:

Once in possession of the names of the persons who had been present at the dinner, I resolved – as a means of enriching the deficient resources of my own memory – to appeal to the memory of the rest of the guests; to

¹ Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59. Subsequent references to this novel will be cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

write down all that they could recollect of the social events of the birthday; and to test the result, thus obtained, by the light of what had happened afterwards, when the company had left the house.²

Blake turns to a pragmatic, scientific methodology of evidence-gathering, of tests and results, with the intention of turning stories into legal testimonies and thus compensating for the refusal of his own memory to offer him the requisite information. But, even more theatrically than Hartright, Blake will spend the novel trying to use these rational methods of detection to fill in a narrative gap that, as it turns out, can be only filled by a very different way of knowing, one quite alien to the forensic logic of detection. Discovering that all evidence points to himself as the thief, Blake must, with the help of a physiological experiment, shut out his mental consciousness with a dose of opium and allow his body to re-tell the story of that birthday night in which it carried out the robbery without permission from his conscious will.

These two scenes demonstrate an interaction between two very different types of narrative and ways of knowing: detection and sensation. Detection privileges mental prowess and individual detachment. It values total knowledge, classificatory acumen, and the acts of authoritative interpretation, prediction, and explanation. Detection is diagnostic and usually rooted in the cognitive prowess of a skilled individual who can unearth the truth according to a faith in the ultimate knowability of human character, motive, and identity, from the outside. And, unsurprisingly, it is a type of scientific method – systematic, formulaic, reliable, measurable – and thus closely associated with the nineteenth-century codification of science as a discipline distinct from philosophy. Sensation, on the other hand, is a way of knowing rooted in sentience, in the sensory

² Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 357. Subsequent references to this novel will be cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

experience and the physiological processes of a singular biological body constantly in flux and responding to a changing environment. An alternative to epistemology and mind-based knowledge, it arises from nervous impulses and the singularities of particular bodies, and it therefore resists prediction or categorization. If detection strives for stable objective knowledge, sensation describes immediate and fleeting subjective feeling.

Both of these terms – detection and sensation – were used to describe the generic categories into which *The Woman in White*, *The Moonstone*, and many other popular novels could be grouped in the 1860s and 70s. “Sensation fiction” was a term affixed to a short-lived subset of novels by critics who descried what they saw as a direct appeal to readers’ nerves with “sensational” storylines inspired by newspaper stories, but it also referred to the novels’ explicit engagement with sensational bodies and the stories they could tell. Although the phrase “detective fiction” would not be widely used until the late 1880s, it was in the 1850s and 60s that detection – and the professional detective – began to play a central role in popular novels.³ Sensation and detection were by no means clear-cut categories; their thematic and narrative elements flowed across the boundaries of subgenre and influenced, and were influenced by, novels that can be placed into categories such as the gothic novel, the historical novel, the industrial novel, the colonial novel, the imperial gothic novel, the domestic novel, the romance revival

³ One of the earliest articles on “detective fiction” appeared in *The Saturday Review* in 1886. Although it focused primarily on novels of “foreign importation,” claiming that, with a few exceptions, “[s]o far native talent has not scored,” the article does describe the popularity of detective novels: “If the abundance of supply affords any accurate test, the demand for the detective novel is great and increasing. Novels of this class must surely be counted amongst the greatest successes of the day. It is book-stall success, so to speak.” “Detective Fiction.” *The Saturday Review* (December 4, 1886), 749.

novel, the adventure novel, and, of course, the realist novel. Recent critical work has emphasized these porous generic boundaries⁴

This chapter investigates why and to what effect sensation and detection – defined as two narrative procedures and ways of knowing about human behavior – appeared together in the same novels. It demonstrates how the opposition between sensation and detection translated into formal terms the Victorian drive towards, and simultaneous critique of, objective representations and explanations of human behavior. Building upon George Levine’s identification of the relationship between epistemology and narrative in science and literature, I aim to show how popular novels constructed an opposition between the narrative forms of sensation and detection in order to take apart their own associations between narration and authority and between narrative and

⁴ In her introduction to *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, for instance, Pamela Gilbert notes that “most of the characteristics of sensation are not unique to the genre. Indeed, it was a combination of traits appearing in several bestselling novels in short succession and of anxieties on the part of influential review writers that constructed a category, popularized a name for it, and made it stick.” Pamela K. Gilbert, “Introduction.” *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Maldon, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011): 2. Other critics have traced the impact of sensation fiction on the category of realist fiction. See, for instance, Walter M. Kendrick, “The Sensationalism of Thomas Hardy,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22 no. 4 (1980): 484-503.

Emily Steinlight recently referred to George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, the subject of my next chapter, as a sensation novel. She makes this claim in order to make Eliot’s novel “a particularly strong case for questioning the longstanding opposition of realism and sensationalism without concluding that the former merely subsumes and supersedes the latter. *Daniel Deronda* achieves its formal objectives in large part through its mastery of recognizably sensational techniques.” Emily Steinlight, “Why Novels are Redundant: Sensation Fiction and the Overpopulation of Literature,” *ELH* 79 no. 2 (2012): 512.

Similarly, in her essay in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, Nancy Armstrong uses *Daniel Deronda* to emphasize the legacy of sensation in Victorian fiction, arguing that “If the Victorian novels we consider most worthy of critical attention today consistently incorporate the features that made the sensation novel sensational, then sensation fiction is not marginal but absolutely central to the history of the novel.” Nancy Armstrong, “The Sensation Novel,” *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: Volume 3, The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 139. As Armstrong argued in *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, because “literary criticism has proliferated an impressive number of thematically defined subgenres of the Victorian novel,” which include sensation and detection, “few Victorian novels qualify as realism pure and simple.” Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 167-68.

objective, detached representation.⁵ Levine, along with Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, shows us that nineteenth-century epistemology and objectivity began with the struggle to efface the self, the changeable and unpredictable embodied ego.⁶ When popular novels introduced a detective function in the second half of the century, they transformed narrative omniscience – a narrative of knowing from a privileged position of authority – into a detached, self-effacing function; the detective works best when he can detach himself from his own particularity and, like *Bleak House*'s Mr. Bucket – who, we remember, “mounts a high tower in his mind, and looks out, far and wide” – can become “man in the abstract.”⁷ But in both Victorian sensation fiction and psychological science, detecting the nature and features of human sensory behavior always means encountering the mechanisms of sensation itself – that inchoate set of unpredictable impulses at the root of human behavior. What detection tries so hard to push aside or explain – the particular and the unpredictable, the physiological and the fleeting – it also calls into being as an alternative to its own representational technology. The obsessive drive towards explanations that would evince epistemological mastery of human behavior in psychology and in the novel paradoxically resulted in a counteracting phenomenological impulse – a narrative potential located within the object of knowledge and emerging out of its singular and unpredictable sensations. Rather than sidestepping sensation as the element detection seeks to either overlook or explain away, my purpose is to identify the creative potential of sensation in what I will call the “sensation debates” that straddled psychology and the novel in the 1860s and 70s.

⁵ George Levine, *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

⁶ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone, 2010).

⁷ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Penguin, 2003), 864; 803.

Brought into combination, sensation and detection effected a change in the form of the Victorian novel and how it narrated character. Because the sensation-detective novel was closely associated with debates about sensation and about methods of detection and objectivity happening concurrently in science, my argument concerns both science and fiction. By reading the sensation-detective novel alongside writing about sensation in psychology, I mean to emphasize the intertwined contributions of both fiction and science to theories of human social and psychological life. In Victorian psychology sensation and detection delineate a paradoxical opposition between the new science's methodological approach *to* sensation and its findings *about* sensation – that is, an opposition between sensation as a concrete and identifiable object to be detected and explained, and sensation as an inchoate and largely unknowable set of phenomena that are nevertheless at the root of human behavior and of how a person knows (or becomes a subject of knowledge). The representational objectivity of psychological science often collapsed when it encountered strange sensory phenomena and automatic behaviors, leading to metaphor and storytelling in the place of explanation and description. Popular novels experimented with the very same opposition between knowledge and sensory feeling, and in doing so they created new ways of ascribing narrative to sensory bodies.

When the popular novel mobilized this opposition between sensation and detection, it made them contrasting narrative operations. The formal elements of the Victorian novel became increasingly organized around the juxtaposition of these two narrative modes, disassembling in the process the traditional epistemological bases of narration and narrative authority. Affording to the detective form a mind-centered narrative tasked with producing “objective” truths by detached and well-informed

means, the novel critiqued both the operations of omniscient, third-person narration and the broader cultural impulse towards objective knowledge and representation. Having launched this critique, these novels created in sensation an alternative narrative form: an embodied and immanent storytelling that emerges out of the behaviors and experiences of particular sensory bodies that resist explanation in order to tell their own stories. By affording narrative capacities to sensory phenomena, sensation-detective novels undermined a pervasive association between narrative and centralized, cognitive control. They rooted narrative – that is, the process of recounting or telling about a series of events – in the creative performances of sensory bodies in ways that specifically undermined, even as they tended to activate, a counteracting force of detection that tries to make sensory bodies the objects rather than the agents of narrative.

I. Sensation and Detection in Combination

Mid-nineteenth century novels combined sensation and detection, but they did not invent these narrative forms.⁸ Sensation had its novelistic roots in Gothic romance, with its tales of horror, excitement, intrigue, and the supernatural. Stories of crime and its discovery have a long history (the label of first detective story has been given, for instance, to “The Tale of the Three Apples” in the *Thousand and One Nights* and to Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*⁹), but the eighteenth-century used the novel to develop this fascination with tales of crime and criminals. Take, for instance, William Godwin’s 1794

⁸ I use the term “form” to describe detection and sensation both because I wish to avoid classifying them as separate genres or sub-genres, terms that tend to reinforce a strong differentiation between them.

⁹ See, for instance, Mia Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 169, and David Grossvogel, *Mystery and its Fictions: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

Caleb Williams, a tale of uncovering concealed knowledge and a corrupt criminal justice system that turns the “detective” figure Caleb into the (wrongly) imprisoned criminal.¹⁰ By the nineteenth century, writers of popular fiction had seized upon the popularity of crime stories. Critics of Victorian sensation novels and detective fiction both tend to point to the 1830s and 40s “Newgate novel” as a precursor.¹¹ This small subset of popular novels capitalized on the public fascination with crime and, like the sensation novel, acquired its label from contemptuous critics, who associated it with the popular broadsheets and ballads published from 1773 and known as the Newgate Calendar. Newgate novels featured real or invented criminals, either with the explicit purpose of highlighting social problems (for instance Edward Bulwer’s 1830 *Paul Clifford*) or for sentimental and theatrical effect (as in Harrison Ainsworth’s hugely popular 1839-40 *Jack Sheppard*). Sensation and detection had novelistic precursors, but something would change in the 1860s when they were put into combination.

The novel shifted away from Newgate fiction’s interest in the particularity of the crime and the criminal underworld and from Godwin’s tragic critique of social justice. Instead they located the need for detection at the heart of middle- and upper-class domestic life. These novels produce a drive towards logic, stability, and reasoned objectivity in the face of extreme indeterminacy, coincidence, and excitement.

¹⁰ For more on *Caleb Williams* as a proto detective novel, see Ian Ousby, *Bloodhounds of Heaven: The Detective in English Fiction from Godwin to Doyle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); Michael Cohen, “Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*: Showing the Strains in Detective Fiction,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 10.2 (1998): 203-220; and Caroline Reitz, *Detecting the Nation: Fictions of Detection and the Imperial Venture* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2004).

¹¹ See, for instance, Edward Jacobs and Manuela Mourão, “Newgate Novels,” *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, 26-37; Heather Worthington, “The Newgate Novel,” *The Oxford English History of the Novel in English*, Vol. 3, 134-36; Kate Watson, *Women Writing Crime Fiction, 1860-1880* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 43-46; Lyn Pykett, “The Newgate Novel and Sensation Fiction, 1830-1868,” *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19-39; and Caroline Reitz, “Detective Fiction,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150-53.

Increasingly this impetus for stable knowledge centered on the unpredictable behaviors of sensory bodies. Whereas Gothic and Newgate traditions offered a clear-cut differentiation between the sensational, melodramatic, and even dangerous aspects of criminal behavior and the reliable modes of representation that contained them, Victorian sensation-detective fiction set sensational experience and detective representation in opposition to one another only to demonstrate the interrelation of story and discourse and to trouble the boundaries between what is narrated and the practice of narration.

Most critical accounts of sensation and detection in the nineteenth-century novel treat them as related sub-genres or categories of fiction and offer distinct histories for their appearance in the second half of the century. The rise of detection fiction is usually situated within a larger cultural internalization of detection and discipline, and sensation fiction's growth is generally attributed to changes in journalism, the court-system, and mass print-production.¹² But in giving sensation and detection separate

¹² For criticism that situates detective fiction within a cultural internalization of discipline, see D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Reitz, *Detecting the Nation*; Peter Thoms, *Detection and its Designs: Narrative and Power in Nineteenth-Century Detective Fiction* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998); Ronald Thomas, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Heather Worthington, *The Rise of the Detective in Early Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Scholarship has linked the rise of the detective novel to the centralization of criminal justice, the incorporation of detection as the role of the state, and the localization of detection in an individual whose analytical acumen and specialized knowledge about the laws of human behavior set in apart as uniquely qualified to discover and testify about the criminal and his actions.

The growth of sensation fiction is usually linked to the popularity of sensational journalism, the use of melodrama and special effects in sensational theatre, an increase in mass print production, rising literacy rates and greater availability of novels, and the spectacle of private affairs in the newly established divorce courts following the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act. For a succinct account of these factors in the growth of sensation fiction, see Lyn Pykett, *The Nineteenth-Century Sensation Novel* (Tavistock, UK: Northcote: British Council, 2011) and Andrew Maunder's general introduction to the first volume of *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction: 1855-1890* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004), vii-xxxi.

histories and treating them as aspects of the novel that overlap, criticism has tended to overlook or take for granted the dynamic interplay between them. Those who do address the pairing of sensation and detection tend to treat the two as separate, if intimately related, categories of fiction.¹³ Due to the later popularity of detective fiction, critics of this sub-genre frequently read it as arising out of rather than alongside sensation fiction, despite the fact that the two forms developed in the same novels.¹⁴ Similarly, scholars focusing on sensation fiction tend to sidestep their interaction, merely regarding sensation as the progenitor or prototype for the later detective form.¹⁵ But sensation and detection go hand in hand to such an extent at this point in the history of the novel that scholars nevertheless invariably find it impossible to talk about one without addressing the other, even if they avoid using the specific terms or accounting for their relationship.¹⁶

¹³ Note, for instance, that the *Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Deirdre David, devotes separate chapters to "Detection in the Victorian Novel" and "Sensation and the fantastic in the Victorian Novel."

¹⁴ For instance, in her chapter on "Sensation and Detection" in the 2011 *Companion to Sensation Fiction*, Heather Milton writes that detective fiction, which was not a recognized "genre, or sub-genre" until the late nineteenth century, "is clearly indebted to the sensation novels of the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s" (516).

¹⁵ Lyn Pykett, for instance, explicitly pits sensation and detection against one another when she mentions the debate over whether Collins's *The Moonstone* is a sensation novel or a "prototype of the detective novel." But instead of addressing the relationship between these forms, Pykett sidesteps the issue in order to return to the subject of sensation: "Whatever its claims to be the prototypical English detective novel, *The Moonstone* certainly has many of the key components of the sensation novel." Pykett, *The Nineteenth-Century Sensation Novel*, 51. Ronald Thomas is just as equivocal in his study of detective fiction, referring sensation as detective fiction's "twin" only in passing despite his acknowledgment of the mysteries contained within sensation novels that call for the detective's powers of interpretation. Ronald Thomas, *Detective Fiction*, 7; 63. And although Caroline Reitz reads detection as a sub-genre that collaborates with a range of others, in her focus on detection as a procedure of Englishness and Empire she tends to overlook just what the procedure of detection is interested in uncovering. When writing about Wilkie Collins, for instance, Reitz never mentions sensation. Reitz, *Detecting the Nation*.

¹⁶ Thomas, for instance, acknowledges that "[a]t the center of virtually every detective story is a body upon which the literary detective focuses his gaze and employs his unique interpretive powers." When he discusses the technologies used by literary detectives that were "aimed at making the body write or speak for itself," Thomas hints at but does not account for a sensory

Just why critics imply but rarely acknowledge the interdependence of these narrative forms becomes clearer when we recognize that sensation and detection are usually treated as different and incommensurable aspects of novel form. While detection is defined as an epistemological procedure shared by narrator and detective, sensation is usually understood as a facet of the novel's content (its sensational storylines) or its reception (the reader's sensational affect). This incommensurability means that those who do explicitly address the relationship between sensation and detection often do so by coopting Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* in order to posit sensational bodies as the products of disciplinary power. Scholars such as D.A. Miller and Ann Cvetkovich, for instance, argue that detection produces a sensational body over which to exert power in the form of knowledge, containment, classification, or regulation. Miller argues that sensation novels operate by rendering the "liberal subject the subject of a *body*" under "continual supervision."¹⁷ Similarly, because Cvetkovich reads sensation – particularly the naturalization of a sensational female body – as the product of male detection and discipline, that sensational body appears to be nothing more than a cultural construct and therefore always an object rather than a subject of knowledge.¹⁸

While "the body" – especially the female body – was certainly the repository of innumerable nineteenth-century cultural constructions, to read sensation solely in terms of symptomatic eruptions of nervousness and hysteria within an institutional framework of disciplinary power is to obscure the creative potential afforded to sensory

body that can in fact "write or speak for itself" by its own narrative agency rather than merely as a product of the legitimizing or fixing procedures of detection. Thomas, *Detective Fiction*, 2; 17.

¹⁷ Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 163; 158.

¹⁸ Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

bodies in Victorian fiction.¹⁹ The risk is that we buy into the idea that reason and mental control (properties of the male detective for Cvetkovich, or of the social function of discipline for Miller) must be hierarchically superior in these novels to an unpredictable sensory body that acts according to nervous impulses. As I will show, however, even as sensation novels call upon detection to explain and make legible sensory bodies as objects of cultural knowledge, those same novels demonstrate the limits of such explanatory mechanisms and introduce an alternative form of narrative agency rooted in the creative potential of sensation itself.

It should be clear, then, that my use of “sensation” is not limited to the novel’s capacity to excite responses in a reader. Sensation is a narrative form just as detection is a narrative form, and both are also featured in the content of these novels as mechanisms of knowing or feeling. The sensation plot is invariably a mystery or secret rooted in a person or persons whose physiological actions, experiences, and impulses are at odds with a set of rational, legal, or socially established facts about themselves – that is, with a stable identity as a single and discrete person over time represented by the fingerprint or the mug shot. Sensation-detective novels generate their plots from the slipperiness of identity. They feature mistaken identity (Laura Fairlie’s imprisonment in the asylum in *The Woman in White*); people wrongly suspected of being criminals (Eustace Woodville

¹⁹ It is telling that so much of the critical work on sensation fiction has focused heavily on the pathology of bodies – on disease, hysteria, nervousness, madness – rather than on what I stress as the creative potential of nervous response. See, for instance, Sally Shuttleworth, “‘Preaching to the Nerves’: Psychological Disorder in Sensation Fiction,” in *A Question of Identity: Women, Science, and Literature*, ed. Marina Benjamin, 192-222 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine, and Victorian Popular Culture* (Basingstoke, Hants. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Pamela Gilbert, *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women’s Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Peter Logan, *Nerves and Narratives: A Cultural History of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century British Prose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

in *The Law and the Lady*); people who commit crimes without knowing they have done so (Franklin Blake in *The Moonstone*); impersonation, disguise, and changing identity (Magdalen in *No Name*, Isabel Carlyle in *East Lynne*, Lydia Gwilt in *Armada*, and Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*); people who appear to share the same identity (the doubles Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White*); people suffering from madness or nervous disorder (Lady Audley, Anne Catherick, Lydia Gwilt, and a host of others); characters with the same name and mysterious connections to one another (*Armada*).

In each case, these novels render character fluid and unfixed while at the same time introducing a detective narrative function (whether in the person of a detective figure or in the operations of truth-seeking at work among characters and narrator) that aims to fix identity. This detective narrative function marshals a set of stable signifiers to narrate, or explain, from an objective and detached point of view, a body that can otherwise know itself only according to changeable sensory experience. These novels thereby emphasize a gap between, on the one hand, objective (stable, reliable, valid) knowledge about the nature of a person and, on the other, subjective (variable, fleeting, internal) intuition about the nature of a person contained within sensory experience. But they also make sensation and detection part of a single formulation, intertwined procedures for narrating human experience that rely upon and perpetuate each other. By exaggerating a division between objective knowledge about a person and the fleeting feelings of being a person, these novels illustrate the representational problem of the novel form: how can you tell a story about human behavior from the outside, with the distance and detachment of third-person omniscience or first-person self-reflection? In a distinctly Victorian mode, sensation nevertheless anticipates the modernist and

postmodernist project of the novel and its distrust of omniscience or objectivity; it offers a form of narration rooted in the immediacy and immanence of physiological feeling.

We can find a succinct example of this complex interplay between sensation and detection in *The Woman in White*, a novel in which Collins introduced the narrative procedures he would later develop into formal detection in *The Moonstone*. When Walter Hartright sets out to find a name for the “sensation... for which [he] can find no name,” he begins a detective quest prompted by his sensory body. The detective method is called into being by sensation in Collins’s novels: mysteries generated by or centered around sensory bodies call for methods of truth-telling to render a reality that will explain and contain their singular strangeness. Hartright must differentiate between and construct a true history of the two women his body knows to be somehow connected; he must both explain his own sensory experience with reliable data and objectively establish the separate identities of Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick. The form of the novel itself becomes an extension of this use of narrative to establish objective truth: the combination of many narratives is presented to the reader as an effort to establish Laura’s true identity and distinguish her from Anne Catherick.

But if Hartright’s sensory experience calls for detective methods to offer an explanatory narrative, detection also tends to generate its own resistance in the form of sensation. It does this in two ways. First, detection underscores a type of sensory information about which it can never offer an explanation, drawing our attention to what must either be a narrative gap (that which cannot be explained) or an alternative narrative capacity located within sensory experience. For instance, Hartright finds that despite all efforts to reveal the truth about Laura and her captors, and despite the fact that he has successfully hidden Laura in a London home, he cannot use detective

methods to discover just what Laura experienced in the asylum. Her body contains a narrative of events that it cannot disclose to the detective and his methods of investigation: "The terrible story of the conspiracy so obtained, was presented in fragments, sadly incoherent in themselves, and widely detached from each other"; "The one remaining chance, which I had at first thought might be trusted to serve us – the chance of appealing to her recollection... was proved, by the sad test of our later experience, to be hopeless" (432-33; 443). Second, methods of detection tend to perpetuate sensation by either becoming or generating sensory reactions. When all avenues of detective pursuit appear closed to him, Hartright returns to his original sensory experience: "My old superstition clings to me, even yet. I say again the woman in white is a living influence in our three lives" (460). And upon moments of discovery – for instance that Sir Percival's parents were never married or that Laura is still alive – explanation is always preempted by sensory reaction: "My heart gave a great bound, and throbbed as if it would stifle me. I looked again—I was afraid to believe the evidence of my own eyes. No! not a doubt. The marriage was not there" (520). In each case, the novel's logic of explanatory narrative perpetuates and is interrupted by characters' physiological and sensory experiences.

The Woman in White thus explores both the need for and the limits of objective narration. It experiments with the drive towards narrative that can tell the truth by adhering to a methodological process of observation, data-gathering, and explanation. Hartright begins his account with the determination to "present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace the course of one complete series of events, by making the persons who have been most closely connected with them, at each successive stage, relate their own experience, word for word" (5-6). The form of the

novel is based not only on a scientific-legal method of evidence-gathering and testimony that can objectively construct a truth about human behavior, but also in the capacity of each person to narrate a valid portion of the truth that, when collected with others, will result in a single, stable, accurate story. *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* share this interest in combining subjective accounts to erase the particularity of subjectivity and replace it with objective truth – what Franklin Blake in *The Moonstone* refers to as "Objective-Subjective and Subjective-Objective" ways of knowing (355). But alongside this ostensible focus on objectivity and reliable representation, sensation-detective novels formulate an alternative subjectivity rooted in immediate and fleeting feelings rather than in the stable autonomy of a person's mind and memory. Laura offers no intentional subjective account, but her body's "nervous and sensitive" reactions and her very inability to remember offer another form of subjective and "fragmentary" storytelling (435).

In order to understand just what happens when these novels pit sensory subjectivity against detective objectivity we need to appreciate how they use narrative to probe and respond to the same questions about methodology and explanation that were being asked concurrently in the newly scientific discipline of psychology, questions specifically about the nature of sensation. By turning to psychology, my point is to both demonstrate a fluidity between literature and science as they treated sensation and to show that the novel was able to use narrative to advance and experiment with its own theories about the potential for a phenomenological alternative to epistemological detachment, self-knowledge, and objectivity.

II. Sensation Debates and the Science of Psychology

Although sensation and detection were not always the explicit terms of debate in the fledgling discipline of psychology, they describe the two principal issues that characterized the development of psychology as a scientific discipline in the second half of the nineteenth century. Sensation, in particular, was one of the central subjects of cultural interest in the 1860s and 70s.²⁰ As an object of study, sensation was the most contested issue at the crux of psychology and physiology: what is the relationship between sensing (sentience) and knowing (consciousness), between “body” and “mind” traditionally conceived? After all, psychology developed out of a philosophy of mind rooted in John Locke’s emphasis on “sensations” as the basis of ideas, and the rise of physiological methods of study built upon Lockean associationism while emphasizing the body’s centrality in this sensory procedure. Detection describes psychology’s methodological problem. Could psychology be described accurately as a science rather than as an introspective philosophical method? Although philosophy of the mind dated back to the earliest philosophical writings and was already associated with anatomy, in

²⁰ Most critics stress the centrality of sensation to the period as a symptom of modern life and heightened feeling, and I think many critics overlook the centrality of debates about the nature of sensation in psychology to Victorian concerns about popular sensationalism. Jenny Bourne Taylor notes, “‘Sensation’ was one of the keywords of the 1860s.” She points out that “critics self-consciously referred to the 1860s as the ‘age of sensation’ and argues that by this they meant “that the word encapsulated the experience of modernity itself – the sense of continuous and rapid change, of shocks, thrills, intensity, excitement.” Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In The Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), 2; 3. As James Secord points out in his book *Victorian Sensation*, sensation, which had been part of the culture of sensibility in the eighteenth-century, took on new meanings in the nineteenth century: “A ‘sensation’ came to mean an excited or violent emotion felt by an entire community and produced by a common experience.” James A. Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

the 1860s and 70s many of its practitioners began to explicitly claim for their study the status of a science rather than a natural philosophy.²¹

The first British journal devoted to psychology – *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Psychology* (first published in 1876) – succinctly illustrates the centrality of both detection and sensation to this new discipline. In its first issue, editor George Croom Robertson placed methodology – how to conduct and define psychology – at the heart of the new journal’s mission: “Nothing less, in fact, is aimed at in the publication of *MIND* than to procure a decision of [the] question as to the scientific standing of psychology.”²² While “detection” wasn’t the term Croom Robertson or many of contributors would use, I refer to the scientific method in psychology as detection because it describes an approach that assumes the underlying existence of facts about human behavior that are discoverable by one who uses the right techniques to uncover them. This was a period during which “science” was still very much a heterogeneous set of practices rather than a standardized methodology, just as professionalized detection had yet to develop a consistent set of regulated procedures. For this reason, both science and detection were keenly aware of the need for methodological standards, and their approaches overlapped.

²¹ For more on the long history of the study of mind and body in philosophy, see Tim Crane and Sarah Patterson, ed, *History of the Mind-Body Problem* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000) and Stephen Everson, ed., *Psychology (Companions to Ancient Thought 2)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). As Richard Kremer notes, though, “for the early historians, physiology would retain a subordinate status in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century universities as part of ‘theoretical medicine’ or the ‘institutes of medicine.’ Not until early in the nineteenth century would physiology achieve its ‘independence,’ especially from medical anatomy.” Richard L. Kremer, “Physiology,” *The Cambridge History of Science Volume 6: Modern Life and Earth Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 343.

²² [George Croom Robertson], “Prefatory Words,” *Mind* 1.1 (January 1876), 3.

When Victorian psychology investigated sensation, its methodological approach and its findings appeared to contradict one another. On the one hand, psychologists identified sensation as something we can know about, that we can detect using scientific methodology in patterns of behavior and in the observable phenomena of biology and nervous causation in order to determine laws and advance predictions. In other words, sensation was the object of objective knowledge. On the other hand, however, the same psychologists offered narratives of sensation as an inchoate and largely unknowable set of phenomena located in the stimuli and responses of a single person's physiology and that underpin human behavior and consciousness. They theorized a sensory way of knowing which, as I will show, could complicate or even undermine the efforts of detection/science to pin down or make stable what is changeable and fleeting. These sensation debates in psychology provide a framework for understanding just how the sensation-detection novel – which was closely tied to debates about the nature and effects of sensation – took part in this same cultural discourse by experimenting with this very opposition between scientific objectivity and sensory experience, translating it into the opposition between two narrative forms.²³ Viewed alongside psychological discourse, the Victorian novel is a form that challenged epistemological authority by exploring the narrative agency of sensory rather than cognitive processes. In the two subsections that follow, I will explore first how psychology carved out a detective

²³ The relationship between sensation-detective fiction and psychology was multi-faceted and implicated by the fluid relationships between literature and psychology in general, for this was an era in which some of the most prolific literature critics – including E.S. Dallas and George Henry Lewes – were also writing psychological texts. Novelists like Wilkie Collins took an active interest in psychological research; Collins explicitly references William Carpenter's *Principles of Human Physiology* and John Elliotson's *Human Physiology* in *The Moonstone* (385-86). And, as Jenny Bourne Taylor notes, "the sensation novel came to be perceived as the 'bad object' of mid-nineteenth-century culture by being read, *qua* cultural object, through a framework of physiological psychology." *In the Secret Theatre*, 20.

methodology for itself by turning sensory material into matter for objective observation and generalization, and then how the same psychology created a theory of sensory consciousness that made sensation the root of human behavior. These aspects of Victorian physiological psychology are far from clear-cut and separate; in fact their intersections and tensions reveal a conflict between scientific methodology and psychological innovations that the novel would address.

i. Scientific Detection and Objectivity

Proponents of scientific psychology explained that human behavior – including the mechanism of sensation – must conform to patterns or laws that could be identified by the skilled observer.²⁴ Human bodies could be studied for evidence of less visible truths about human nature and subjective human experience, including the workings of the mind. Many Victorian psychologists described their methods of study as if they were detectives using observation and analysis to unearth the universal laws and relations of human behavior. George Henry Lewes, for instance, wrote: “The physiologist presupposes that the psychical facts are known, his task being to detect the physical factors.”²⁵ He also argues that it is the physiologist’s role to “detect” the “other agency” in humans that goes beyond the “functions of the organism common to man and animals.”²⁶ In his textbook *Outlines of Psychology*, James Sully explained that “[t]he growth of observation” required by the psychologist “means the progressive capability

²⁴ The term “scientist” was coined by William Whewell in 1833, but it was not widely used until the 1870s. See David M. Knight, “Scientists and their Publics: Popularization of Science in the Nineteenth Century,” *The Cambridge History of Science Volume 5: The Modern Physical and Mathematical Sciences*, ed. Mary Jo Nye (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2002): 73; 77-78.

²⁵ George Henry Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind: Problem the First, The Study of Psychology, its Object, Scope, and Method* (London: Trubner, 1879), 17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

of noting less conspicuous objects, of detecting finer differences between objects, and of grasping more complex and intricate wholes."²⁷ The question of just what it was physiologists were detecting when they observed and analyzed the "fundamental processes" of human behavior centered on sensation and the sensory functions of the nervous system. The second issue of *Mind* (April 1876) featured an article by Lewes titled "What is Sensation?" in which he placed the uncertainty about this concept at the heart of disagreements between psychologists, philosophers, and physiologists about the nature of mind and body. Concerns about detective method and the nature of sensation in psychology both spoke to a fundamental question about consciousness: how it works and how we come to know about it.

The staunchest proponents of science as a procedure for unearthing truth used detection as a metaphor for science's objective methodology. In 1883, Thomas Henry Huxley, for instance, wrote: "A detective policeman discovers a burglar from the marks made by his shoe, by a mental process by which Cuvier restored the extinct animals of Montmartre from fragments of their bones."²⁸ Huxley implies two things about the detective and scientific method here. The first is that the scientist and the detective share a specific "mental process" – they are methodical and they are experts uniquely able to induce the truth from a series of tiny details. The second is that the information that they "discover" or "restore" is a stable but buried truth about identity gathered

²⁷ James Sully, *Outlines of Psychology*, 1884 (New York: Appleton, 1888), 43. Sully also explains that by "employing [the] instrument of 'analysis,' the psychologist seeks to reduce the several sorts or varieties of intellectual operations, such as perception and judgment, to more fundamental processes. The essential operation in all varieties of knowing is the detecting of relations between things." (26).

²⁸ Thomas Henry Huxley, "On the Educational Value of the Natural History Sciences" *Lay Sermons, Addresses, and Reviews* (New York: Appleton, 1883), 78. For more on the association between the detective and scientific methods, see J.K. Van Dover, *You Know My Method: The Science of the Detective* (Bowling Green State University Press, 1994).

from a physical trace of bodies, either about the specific individual who committed a crime or the distinct species of extinct animals. Detection and science reduce people (and animals) and their behaviors to observable phenomenon.

The application of this detective method of knowing to human behavior was a contentious matter among psychologists, but it was part of the mid-nineteenth-century emergence of objectivity as an epistemological method and goal. The scientization and institutionalization of psychology as a discipline was part of a broad transformation of natural philosophy into the sciences. This “Second Scientific Revolution” saw the establishment of modern scientific disciplines and institutions, a huge advancement in quantitative scientific knowledge and its application in technology, medicine, and industry, and the culmination of a long process by which “science” was now properly (and linguistically) differentiated from philosophy and theology.²⁹ Victorian psychology emerged at the seams of a split between materialists or mechanists (Hartley, Condillac, James Mill, John Stuart Mill) and intuitive or Common Sense philosophers (Reid, Hamilton, Spencer). In the hands of psychologists like William Carpenter, George Henry Lewes, and Alexander Bain, the study of the human mind shifted from introspective associationism to experimental psychology and physiology. The 1860s and 70s lay on the cusp of this shift; the founding editorial of *Mind* (1876) lamented the “unprofessional character” of British psychology and the lack of “scientific

²⁹ For an account of what he calls this “Second Scientific Revolution,” see David Cahan, “Looking at Nineteenth-Century Science: An Introduction,” *From Natural Philosophy to the Sciences: Writing the History of Nineteenth-Century Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3-15. Although the British Association for the Advancement of Science was formed in Britain in 1831, by the end of the century science was yet to connote the same unified disciplinary classification as it does today; instead it was divided into an array of separate disciplines such as chemistry and botany.

consideration" it had previously been afforded and aimed to determine the scientific standing of psychology.³⁰

Daston and Galison show us that nineteenth-century objectivity emerged concomitantly with a fear of, and a need to suppress, subjectivity, or the potential bias of the individual observer. This was a departure from an earlier model of science, in which the faculties of the scientific self (of Linnaeus, for instance) were thought to be configured especially for reasoning and knowing. By the 1860s, Daston and Galison explain, practitioners of what they call "mechanical objectivity" in science began to rely upon techniques and technologies of knowing – in particular machines and scientific instruments – that could overcome the subjective individual's will, personality, expectations, and idealizations – in other words, the particularities of unpredictable selves.³¹ This is the same trend George Levine describes when he writes of the "radical distrust of the corporeal, the contingent, the personal" in Victorian thought.³² But unlike chemistry or astronomy, psychology offered a particularly fraught case for objective knowledge precisely because – as psychologist William Kingdon Clifford protested – "Facts in a man's consciousness are not objects or phenomena to any other man; they are

³⁰ [Croom Robertson], "Prefatory Words," *Mind*, 1. In his article on the history of physiology, Richard Kremer explains that Britain lagged behind Germany and France in physiological study. Kremer, "Physiology," 349.

³¹ "By *mechanical objectivity* we mean the insistent drive to repress the willful intervention of the artist-author, and to put in its stead a set of procedures that would, as it were, move nature to the page through a strict protocol, if not automatically." Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 121.

³² Levine, *Dying to Know*, 68. The Victorians, Levine shows us, took a spiritual mode of transcending individual experience and transformed it into a focus on the universal rather than the particular, the species rather than the individual. For their part, Daston and Galison focus on the tendency of "mechanical objectivity" to focus on the specifics of *particular* objects. However, when they turn to physiology and psychology (specifically after 1880) they trace a "structural objectivity" similarly concerned with overcoming subjectivity, they argue that here objective knowledge replaced attention to particularity with sequences, patterns, and structures of objective knowledge.

capable of being observed only by him.”³³ How was it possible to instantiate objectivity by erasing subjectivity if subjective experience was one’s object of study? This was the conundrum of psychological methodology in the 1870s.

To call psychology a science was, to many introspective psychologists, to challenge the belief that each person is an individual in control of his or her own life and actions, a doubt about individual intellect and reason which tautologically threatened the very ability to know anything at all. In a vehement article in the fourth issue of *Mind* (October 1876), for instance, J.A. Stewart opposed the scientization of psychology on the grounds that it was not a science but “a Method, a certain thoughtful attitude... the critical examination of my own adult opinions, desires, and tastes.”³⁴ Stewart and Clifford, among many others, insisted upon the uniqueness of an individual’s consciousness. But the momentum of psychological theory nevertheless sought to make human consciousness into a set of laws that could be discovered objectively. It maintained that, in Levine’s words, “[k]nowledge is only knowledge when it extends beyond the particular and can be shared. The crisis of knowledge comes when the self, in all of its inevitable situated uniqueness, needs to transcend its situatedness.”³⁵

In order to form an objective science of psychology, the Victorians developed two solutions to the problem of particularity that allowed them to insist upon the reliability of generalizations about human behavior detected from outside personal experience. The first of these was to insist, as did Herbert Spencer, that it was possible to

³³ William Kingdon Clifford, “Body and Mind,” *Fortnightly Review* 16 no.96 (Dec 1874): 727. Clifford was best-known for his insistence that all elements of consciousness – from the simplest feelings of a jellyfish to the consciousness of a human being – are explained by a “mind-stuff” and are molecular.

³⁴ J.A. Stewart, “Psychology—A Science or a Method?” *Mind* 1.4 (October 1876), 451.

³⁵ Levine, *Dying to Know*, 69.

have a “science” of psychology precisely because knowledge about human behavior gained objectively (by the practitioner of science) and knowledge about human behavior understood subjectively (from the point of view of individual experience) were in fact the same thing. His reasoning was that “objective psychology” was built upon elements of subjective experience that could be understood as data – “feelings, ideas, memories, volitions” – and that the two methods must work hand in hand: “[H]aving contemplated [nervous phenomena] on their outsides, we have to contemplate them from their insides.”³⁶ The key to Spencer’s parallelism is both the causal relationship between feelings and “nervous changes” and an accepted belief, “alike popular and scientific, that all the human beings known objectively have feelings like those which each knows subjectively.”³⁷ Spencer’s theory essentially attempted to make subjectivity not the *enemy* of objectivity, as Daston and Galison insist it was, but the instance or example of a larger law. Spencer wanted the best of both worlds – to validate and retain for psychological study the sensory experience of each subjective person while achieving scientific generalizability. The upshot of such parallelism, however, was to subsume subjective experience *within* objective knowledge as the particular example of a more generalizable law. Spencer, after all, writes of “subjective observation” as the “supplement” rather than the counterpart to the methods of objective psychology.³⁸

The second, and much more prevalent, solution to the problem of particularity was a much stronger erasure of subjectivity in a sharp turn to physiological

³⁶ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (New York: Appleton, 1897), 98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 98. In his second volume, Spencer would admit “An analysis conducted in a systematic manner must begin with the most complex phenomena of the series to be analyzed... Consistently to pursue this method throughout Subjective Psychology is difficult.” Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 2 (New York: Appleton, 1894), 4.

investigation. Physiological psychologists proposed that sensory bodies could be understood via the material signs and traces they all have in common, that they should be studied via external observation and detection, through measurements and experiments that could be replicated and that could unearth the laws of behavior. In the words of William George Davies in 1861, "The aim of the logical psychologist is to discover those necessary and universal truths which constitute the science of sciences; in short, the laws of consciousness as the standard of truth."³⁹ Psychologists in Britain influenced by Auguste Comte argued, contra Spencer, that a subjective psychology was not possible, for subjective experience could not be made scientific (that is, known objectively); instead, they argued, the study of human behavioral phenomena should base itself on the study of the nervous system.⁴⁰ As Lewes put it, "We must quit Introspection for Observation."⁴¹ American experimental psychologist George Trumbull Ladd voiced a common argument heard on both sides of the Atlantic for using physiology to properly interpret and make scientific the study of the mind:

For psychology, in order to make valid its claim to be a science, must not merely display the alleged facts of individual mental experience; it must treat these facts analytically, must resolve them into their ultimate factors, and trace the stages of their development from what is simpler to what is more complex; it must also show on all sides their connections and causes, thus placing the phenomena of the mind as much as possible in interaction with the rest of the world. It is because human physiology can contribute largely to such scientific treatment (as distinguished from the mere observation, grouping, and cataloguing) of the phenomena of the

³⁹ William George Davies, *The A, B, C, of Thought: Consciousness and the Standard of Truth* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861), 11.

⁴⁰ Comte's influence led to a British Positivist movement that influenced writers including John Stuart Mill, George Henry Lewes, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, and Herbert Spencer. For more on Comte's influence in Britain, see T. R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity: The Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁴¹ Lewes. *Problems of Life and Mind*, 99. Lewes did not disdain introspection altogether; in fact his approach was not dissimilar to Spencer's in his belief that subjective and objective phenomena were the opposite sides of the same coin.

mind that it is entitled to be considered as furnishing one distinctive and fruitful branch of psychological researches.⁴²

Physiological psychologists often insisted upon what Alexander Bain called the complete “concomitance” between the body and the mind, so that by studying the mechanisms of the body one could uncover factual, reliable knowledge about the mind.⁴³ All subjective psychical experiences had their underlying physical components, and the latter were available for detection.

The upshot of objective psychology was an approach that could overcome the challenges of particular human experience only by claiming to be concerned not with particular bodies and minds, but with bodies and minds in general – what Daston and Galison call a “structural objectivity” because it unearths the enduring laws, sequences, and structures of knowledge common to all and is therefore able to exceed the quirks and particularities of subjectivity. Just as one of Lewes’s experimental brainless frogs (a generalization of all other frogs) would twitch in a predictable way when its nerves were stimulated, so should any behavioral characteristics in a person be the predictable result of identifiable nervous processes. And, by the laws of scientific generalizability, so would all people within a particular category of human life behave according to predictable patterns in given situations. Through articles in *Mind* and other English translations of their work, the German experimental psychology of Hermann von Helmholtz and Wilhelm Wundt began to influence British psychologists towards a set of controlled and mathematically analyzable practices that could produce a purely

⁴² George Trumbull Ladd, *Elements of Physiological Psychology: A Treatise of the Activities and Nature of the Mind from the Physical and Experimental Point of View* (New York: Scribner, 1897), 10.

⁴³ Alexander Bain, “The Feelings and the Will, Viewed Physiologically,” *Fortnightly Review* 3 no.17 (15 Jan, 1866): 575.

objective science of mind, including a “method of measuring sensations.”⁴⁴ For followers of Wundt’s experimental methods, even if the subjective experiences of psychological phenomena could not be measured, it was possible to accurately measure sensory and psychological processes by using reaction times and the time it takes nerves to transmit impulses.

Such objectivity appropriated detection’s inductive logic; the physiologist could conduct experiments not to understand the behavior of single specimens but in order to establish laws, patterns, and propensities and thereby to predict single cases. Certain aspects of subjectivity became factors available for measurement and then generalization; instead of being particular to an individual self they were examples of a category. Lewes, for instance, argued that “if we desire to know the subjective facts with accuracy and fulness, it is obvious that we must learn their objective conditions of production.”⁴⁵ The hope was that, via objective study of sensory experiences as they manifest themselves in identifiable physiological symptoms, subjectivity itself could be made into a collection of facts or laws. Victorian psychology was remarkable for its insistence that the actions of every sensory body could be objects of study open to detection because they operated according to, or in departure from, predictable laws and material causation. Spencer’s evolutionary psychology, for instance, adapted Lamarckian notions of inherited acquired characteristics in order to posit a developmental account of

⁴⁴ See Wilhelm Max Wundt, Lecture III, including “I Estimation of the Intensity of Sensation. II. Mathematical Expression of the Law of Sensation-Intensities. III. Significance of Negative Sensation-Values; Unit of Stimulus and Unit of Sensation,” *Lectures on Human and Animal Psychology*, Second edition (London: Sonnenschein; 1894), 35. Wundt argues that “The relation between sensation and stimulus is of importance because the knowledge of it allows us for the first time in the history of psychology to apply principles of exact measurement to mental magnitudes” (59).

⁴⁵ Lewes. *Problems of Life and Mind*, 14.

psychology in terms of the species as well as the individual. And Lewes, especially in his later work, emphasized psychology as a social rather than an individual science, defining "Mind as an expression of organic and social conditions."⁴⁶ In *Problems of Life and Mind*, he reversed the order of generalization from the simple (the individual) to the complex (the race) and viewed the experiences of a single person as a product of the experiences of a species: "I allude to the experience of the race in its influence on the experience of the individual; that is to say, the direction impressed by the General Mind on the feelings and opinions of particular minds."⁴⁷ This General Mind "indicate[d] something over and above the individual mind" and taught us that the object of psychology is "*the* human mind, not *a* mind."⁴⁸

Because individual sensory and psychological phenomena were introduced by this new psychology as instances of general phenomena, any deviation from the norm or law had to be rendered abnormal or placed within identifiable physiological categories. Hence the publication of numerous books and articles on mental illness and insanity after the mid-nineteenth century as diseases like epilepsy became linked to criminality. As a detective science, psychology had to erase or pathologize the temporary and the particular. So Lewes explains that:

From the fleeting changes of the individual [science] extricates a group of characters which these changes have in common; from the multitudinous diversities of individual organisms it extricates a group of characters common to all. It finds the sentient organism reacting differently in infancy, in maturity, and in old age; differently from year to year, day to day, hour to hour. But amid these changes there are characters which do

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 159.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

not change; and the total of these is condensed into the abstract conception, Mind.⁴⁹

This methodology of evidence-gathering and detection thus sought not to uncover the intricacies of sensory phenomena and its “fleeting changes,” but rather to establish laws and universal patterns to which it could “condense” and pin down singular behaviors.

However, the same psychology that made the sensory body a stable object of empirical knowledge paradoxically also developed a theory of sensation that made the fleeting and unpredictable sensory experiences foundational to human psychology. Victorian psychology made sensation – the undirected operations of a biological body – into a type of agency and explained that it underpinned or even meant the very same thing as consciousness. The resulting sensory body, operating according to its own (often unpredictable) will and sensory consciousness, had the potential to exceed or even flout the laws and patterns of scientific detection.

ii. Sensation and the Sensory Consciousness

The notion of sensation as involved in or foundational to knowing was not a new idea in the Victorian period, but it did transform an empiricist tradition by affording sensation its own active mechanism in human thought. In the Aristotelian tradition, *aesthesia* (sensation) describes the ways in which we engage with and perceive objects in the world, providing the basis for other faculties of *phantasia* and thought to build knowledge.⁵⁰ Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British empiricists, including Locke and Hume, would employ this same notion of sensation as the foundational form of

⁴⁹ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind*, 160.

⁵⁰ For more on Aristotle’s psychology, see the section on psychology in Georgios Anagnostopoulos, ed. *A Companion to Aristotle*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

experience upon which more complex ideas could be based, and they would describe a continuum between physical and psychical processes, since all forms of knowledge are, at root, based upon sensory engagements with the world. When Victorian psychology distinguished between sensation and perception by emphasizing physiological versus cognitive processes, it built upon the empiricist primacy of sensation and made sensation an active principle of engagement with the world. A better understanding of the nervous system led physiologists to regard the spinal cord as an autonomous structure with its own operations independent of the brain's authority. This transformed an older Galenic model of anatomy that had maintained, in the words of Charles Bell, "that the brain presides over the body through the spinal marrow and nerves" (a notion Bell believed to be "utterly at variance with anatomy").⁵¹ By mid century, physiologists recognized that the brain is the culmination rather than the origin of the spinal cord.⁵² Inverting the primacy of brain over nervous body, physiologists placed the body's sensations at the core of human behavior and bolstered an understanding of mental processes – of the "mind" – as extensive across the body rather than a discrete cognitive center.

Victorian physiology essentially described a sensory body that could act on its own, or that could act in place of a self-conscious will. Sensation was not something passive – a transmission from environment to a body to be interpreted by a mental principle or a collection of impulses and bodily faculties regulated by a mind. In his essay "What is Sensation?" published in the second issue of *Mind*, Lewes explained that

⁵¹ Sir Charles Bell, *The Nervous System of the Human Body*, 1830 (London: Renshaw, 1844), 2.

⁵² For more on this transformation of the relationship between nervous system and brain, see chapter 1 of Edwin Clarke and L.S. Jacyna, *Nineteenth-Century Origins of Neuroscientific Concepts* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987).

a body is always “conscious” of all material of which it also has “sensation.”

Physiologically, he maintained, these terms – sensation and consciousness – mean the same thing, a muddling of nomenclature that he blamed for much confusion in psychological writing.⁵³ He had made this same point back in 1859 when he explained that “Consciousness in the particular sense, is only another term for Sensibility: we have as many different forms of consciousness as we have different kinds of sensation.”⁵⁴ This insight demanded a new way of understanding what we ordinarily call mental consciousness as a type of “attention” that selects from those things of which the sensory body is already conscious.⁵⁵

In *Illusions: A Psychological Study*, James Sully made the same point using the very terms of the empiricist tradition – sensation and perception – but turning the hierarchy into a relationship between alternative processes: “When a sensation arises in

⁵³ George Henry Lewes, “What is Sensation?” *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1 no.2 (April 1876), 157-161.

⁵⁴ Lewes, *The Physiology of Common Life*, Vol. 2 (New York: Appleton, 1875), 65. Lewes would go on to refer to the most general form of consciousness – sensation – as “Systematic-Consciousness.” This “includes all those sensations which arise in the system at large, chiefly in the organic processes, and form[s] the more massive and diffusive elements of the sense of existence” (70).

⁵⁵ In his *Physiology of Mind*, Henry Maudsley would agree in principle with Lewes, although he insisted upon a differentiation between sensation and consciousness on the grounds that they were not the same thing but different levels of the nervous system. He agreed, however, that physiological science suffered from a confusion of nomenclature, exclaiming: “What different perceptions or reactions... are confounded by the loose way of using the word sensibility!” In his wish to “form a distinct conception of the relations of consciousness to... different forms of sensibility,” he argued that “we must at the outset abandon the notion of consciousness as something of constant quality, which either is or is not, and must realise the truth that it may exist in different degrees, ranging from the highest display of self-consciousness through grades of sub-consciousness down to unconsciousness.” Arguing that we are not conscious of many of the sensory actions in our bodies which nonetheless affect our mental lives (sexual organs, involuntary movements that make us feel more or less easy), Maudsley claimed that these phenomena in our bodies can no more be called consciousness than the seemingly intentional reactions between chemicals when placed in combination with one another can be called conscious. Maudsley’s work contributes to a body of Victorian physiological work that explored how much of what happens in the sensory system *and* in our mental states is beyond the realm of awareness and self-consciousness. Henry Maudsley, *The Physiology of Mind* (New York: Appleton, 1877), 94-95.

the mind, it may, under certain circumstances, go unattended to. In that case there is no perception. The sensation floats in the dim outer regions of consciousness as a vague feeling, the real nature and history of which are unknown."⁵⁶ In other words, even when a sensation was not perceived or attended to, it could still be present and *experienced*.⁵⁷ The point was that, in Sully's terms, we just cannot quite pinpoint the "real nature and history" of these aspects of consciousness; they cannot be known from any external or observational perspective. Nor, for that matter, could they be known subjectively if by subjectivity we refer to a cognitive capacity of perceptive awareness. For Sully sensation offered an alternative to perceptive, cognitive knowledge.

This articulation of sensation as an alternative mode of consciousness prompted impassioned debate among psychologists and physiologists about human agency and made what I am calling the sensation debates a prominent part of Victorian intellectual life. The sensation novel and the critical response it generated were part of this debate. At its most extreme, the mechanistic view of the body's primacy in action made everything that looked like human will into the product of sensory processes; as Thomas Henry Huxley argued: "the feeling we call volition is... the symbol of that state of the

⁵⁶ James Sully, *Illusions: A Psychological Study* (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), 20-21.

⁵⁷ This was to disagree with both earlier and later notions of the relationship between sensation and perception. Hume, for example, left little room for the existence of sensations without perceptions. Without perception, there could be no self for Hume: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist." David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.4.6: 165. William James would take Hume's separation of sensation and perception and insist that perception was a *part of* sensation: "Perception always involves Sensation as a portion of itself; and Sensation in turn never takes place in adult life without Perception also being there." *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1950), 2.1.

brain which is the immediate cause of [a voluntary] act. We are conscious automata."⁵⁸ But the implicit challenge leveled by physiological explanations for mental phenomena to the notion of a self-governing individual made even those physiologists such as Lewes and Bain who insisted that volition had roots in material consciousness hesitant to assign physical causes to mental will to the same extent as Huxley.⁵⁹ The concern was this: if mental processes spread out through a sensory body and were caused by nervous impulses, then what space was left for human intention? There existed an uncomfortable recognition across the spectrum of Victorian psychological writing that human beings contain agencies that exist outside the realm of a traditionally-conceived "self" as the controlling center of being.⁶⁰ Psychologists went to great lengths to cut a pathway between the extremes of materialism (all agency located in physical processes) and spiritualism (a separate immaterial self). Take William Carpenter, for instance, who stoically held on to the concept of a distinct human "Will," which he termed a "directing

⁵⁸ Thomas Henry Huxley, "On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and Its History," *The Fortnightly Review* 16 no.95 (Nov 1874): 577.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Bain's "The Feelings and the Will, Viewed Physiologically," and Lewes's second volume of *The Physiology of Common Life*, particularly the second and third section of his ninth chapter. Bain argues that "Voluntary action is, in the face of it, a physical fact" (587), and he does claim that all human behavior is attributable to the "Law of Pleasure and Pain" (588). However, he focuses throughout his work on the "concomitance" of physiological and psychological phenomena, as did Lewes, who was quick to point out that these were two *separate* sciences. See Lewes *Physiology*, 9-11.

⁶⁰ In *Objectivity*, Daston and Galison demonstrate that as the nineteenth-century began to distrust the capacity of an individual mind to produce accurate knowledge – the distrust of subjectivity they identify as a corollary to the development of mechanical objectivity – it developed ways of compensating for this lack: the use of machines to replace biased individual minds ("mechanical objectivity"), the generalization of all sensory experience into laws ("structural objectivity"), and the trained judgment of experts (a transition they date to the twentieth century). In stressing the ways in which nineteenth century intellectuals sought to train and discipline their subjective selves in order to attain objectivity and make themselves more like machines, Daston and Galison overlook the extent to which nineteenth-century psychology identified and explored the capacities of those aspects of a person's consciousness that were neither individual nor mind-centered. While it is certainly true that the Victorians were concerned with the virtues of self-control, what this argument – and many other instantiations of this critical interest in detachment – overlook is the Victorian interest in those aspects of the self that fell outside the realm of mind-centered control.

power” with the ability to take over, at times, from the body and its processes.⁶¹

Carpenter’s sometimes half-hearted attempts to retain a dualism that left space for human agency are overshadowed in much of his work by his influential theory of unconsciousness. The power of volition, he explained, is entirely absent from many of our actions, which are instead the result of what he termed “unconscious cerebration.”⁶² A sensory body can act and think on its own; it has what he terms a “sensational consciousness.”⁶³

Carpenter’s approach is characteristic of a mid-century physiological psychology that, instead of making an ontological distinction between mind and body, vastly expanded the sensory body’s role in human behavior and consciousness, even while occasionally and meekly reserving an immaterial principle of agency that had yet to be explained. “Unconscious cerebration” is exemplary of a Victorian theory very different to the Freudian depth-model of the mind and unconsciousness. Victorian accounts of unconsciousness make it a crucial source of human behavior, including some of our most sophisticated thoughts and achievements. A range of phenomena fell within the realms of the Victorian unconsciousness, including the activities of the mind and body while we sleep or daydream; the automatic habits of our bodies without explicit direction from the mind; our ability to synthesize information and perform complicated

⁶¹ William Carpenter, *Principles of Human Physiology*, 1842 (Philadelphia: Blanchard, 1859), 605. Carpenter argued: “It is, in fact, in virtue of the Will, that we are *not* mere thinking automata, mere puppets to be pulled by suggesting-strings” (543). But he went on to admit that some people do act as automata, and “it is by the study of those states in which the Will is completely in abeyance... that we shall obtain the most satisfactory ideas of what share the Will really takes in the operations of our minds and in the direction of our conduct, and of what must be set down to that Automatic operation of our psychical nature which is correlated to Cerebral action” (544).

⁶² William Carpenter, *Principles*, 589.

For an in-depth look at the impact of this theory of cognition and its importance to Victorian literature, see Vanessa Ryan, *Thinking Without Thinking in the Victorian Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

⁶³ William Carpenter, *Principles*, 545.

tasks (like playing the piano) without thinking through each element of the action; the nervous impulses that underlie our behaviors, and so on. For Carpenter, “unconscious cerebration” meant all mental activity that occurs outside of explicit awareness.

But the Victorians had no unified theory of unconsciousness or sensation. Throughout the extensive body of literature on physiological psychology from the mid-1850s, the language of “consciousness” or “unconsciousness” and “sensation” or “sensibility” becomes equivocal, a point to which both Lewes and Henry Maudsley called attention. Maudsley would lament “What different perceptions or reactions, for example, are confounded by the loose way of using the word sensibility!”⁶⁴ Sensation could be the obverse of consciousness, or it could broaden our concept of consciousness by offering an alternative form of awareness or engagement with the world to attentive thought. Physiologists frequently referred to sensations of which a body is “conscious,” even when an attentive mind is not, a confusion of language that irritated Maudsley. This linguistic complication highlights an attempt and a difficulty on the part of many Victorian psychologists to explain the relationship between sensation and consciousness when the properties usually attributed to consciousness (intention, control, will) were increasingly recognized as properties of a sensory body. The explanatory function of objective science – akin to the function of the detective to account for true events – faltered in the face of sensation.

There is consequently a clear difference in psychological writings between the concrete explanations written retrospectively to describe experiments, laws of behavior, and the actions of nerves, and the narratives used to describe discrete sensory

⁶⁴ Maudsley, *The Physiology of Mind*, 94. Lewes made the same point in his *Mind* essay: “Consciousness stands for Sensibility in general, and also for a particular *mode* of Sensibility, known as Reflection, Attention, or Thought.” Lewes, “What is Sensation?” 160.

experiences. These discursive differences both distinguish scientific writing from fiction and emphasize the fluid boundaries between the two. When psychology gave examples of how sensation pervaded human experience, its descriptions gave way to metaphors; its tests, results, and diagrams gave way to strange vignettes that writers then turned into evidence of behavioral laws. Psychological literature is full of stories of single and quite peculiar cases featuring people responding to impulses that arise from the mysterious realms of sensation rather than from the identifiable functions of perception: of artists composing poetry or music without intention; of sleepwalkers who perform actions without any operations of volition, forethought, or memory. In his *Principles of Human Physiology*, for instance, Carpenter introduces one after the other “remarkable” and “striking” case to illustrate his points and from which to draw general conclusions, including a “very extraordinary case” of a woman to illustrate his point that there can be a “change... effected in the condition of the Nervous Centres” that allows it to be later “excited from a passive to an active condition.”⁶⁵ From this category of physiological behavior he turns to the peculiar tale of the woman, who:

during the delirium of fever, continually repeated sentences in languages unknown to those around her, which were found to be Latin, Greek, and Hebrew... Of these she stated herself, on her recovery, to be perfectly ignorant; but on tracing her former history, it was ascertained that, in early life she had lived as a servant with a clergyman, who had been accustomed to walk up and down his passage, repeating or reading aloud sentences in these languages, which she must have retained in her memory unconsciously to herself.⁶⁶

In the second volume of *The Physiology of Common Life*, Lewes offers examples of sensory experiences with which he assumes the reader will be familiar (such as how “we” are affected by words read aloud even when we are lightly sleeping), as well as personal

⁶⁵ William Carpenter, *Principles of Human Physiology*, 546.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

anecdotes (trying to wake a waiter by calling out different names that do not rouse him until he calls “waiter”), and imagined vignettes (two sisters asleep in a room, only one of whom will wake when a child cries next door because she is used to attending to the child). These stories are marshaled as evidence of laws, but they are also presented as curiosities, strange instances of sensory phenomena. Because, as Sully had explained, the “real nature and history” of sensation remained unknown, it was not fully accountable by the explanatory functions of objective science and required a different type of narrative: a storytelling.

Often in their efforts to generalize the operations of sensation, psychologists slipped into the language of grand metaphor to narrate rather than explain those operations. Carpenter and Frances Power Cobbe employed the image of a rider and a horse to explain the relationship between the two parts of what Cobbe called a “double consciousness,” a split between a traditionally conceived “Conscious Self” and an equally conscious body. Cobbe, writing in 1870, expanded the potential of the horse in this metaphor in comparison to Carpenter’s earlier use of the same image. In his 1874 *Principles of Mental Physiology*, Carpenter elaborated on the metaphor he had used in his 1842 *Principles of Human Physiology*: “Now and then, it is true, some unusual excitement calls forth the essential independence of the equine nature; the horse takes the bit between his teeth, and runs away with his master.”⁶⁷ Cobbe reversed the emphasis to highlight the animal agency of the horse over the rider in a metaphor that pays regard to evolutionary theory: “[W]e are not Centaurs, steer and rider in one,” she wrote; “[we are] horsemen, astride on roadsters which can trot very well a little way when we drop

⁶⁷ William Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, 6th ed. (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), 24. The original reference in *Principles of Human Physiology* can be found on page 116 as a quotation from “Dr. Reid.”

the reins, and which at other times play and canter off without our permission.”⁶⁸ Cobbe equates the agency of body and mind and emphasizes that a sensory body has an animalistic consciousness that can take over the very actions that are supposed to be performed by a controlling mind, a rider. A body can, she insisted, “think *without us*.”⁶⁹

What this language of odd vignette and metaphor elaborate is a poignant exception to the language of explanation and generalization privileged by scientific psychology, tempting us to conclude that it is in fictional narrative forms that Victorian writers found the most appropriate means for depicting a sensory self. As we have seen, the single sensory body, with its own will, was both the product of Victorian psychology and the particularity that it must overlook or coopt as evidence of a universal law in order for science to treat its actions as knowable according to universal patterns and propensities. Limited to describing and accounting for patterns, norms, and propensities, a scientific psychology had to make any deviation from such norms abnormal and thus bring it within the system. “Psychology is a science of the human mind,” wrote Lewes, “not of any individual mind. No science can be founded on single specimens: it formulates general laws, not cases. The individual observer has his idiosyncrasies, peculiarities belonging to his organism and education; these have to be eliminated or reduced to law.”⁷⁰ Here was the fantasy of complete omniscience, of the

⁶⁸ Frances Power Cobbe, “Unconscious Cerebration,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 23 (Nov 1870): 37. We might compare this horse and rider metaphor to E.S. Dallas’s notion of the “hidden soul,” which he described in his characteristic metaphorical language: “there is a mental existence within us which may be so called-- a secret flow of thought which is not less energetic than the conscious flow, an absent mind which haunts us like a ghost or a dream and is an essential part of our lives.” E.S. Dallas, *The Gay Science* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1866), 199.

⁶⁹ Cobbe, 37.

⁷⁰ Lewes. *Problems of Life and Mind*, 96.

disembodied observer – what Conan Doyle would term a “calculating machine” when describing the superlative detective scientist Sherlock Holmes.⁷¹

I draw this comparison between science and fiction to emphasize the fact that, when a novel introduces the detective to explain sensational events, it takes up a prevalent nineteenth-century drive towards epistemological explanation while also experimenting with the creative capacities of sensory experience that evade that epistemological function. If scientific psychology was interested not in cases but in general laws (except when it slipped into fictional language to narrate peculiar cases), then the novel inverted this interest and focused on particularity, strangeness, and creativity of sensational bodies. The relationship of sensation-detective novels to psychology’s interest in sensation and detection is more than cultural coincidence or evidence of the fluid boundaries between literature and science. As I will now demonstrate, narrative form could test out the capacities of sensory experience as the basis for human action and thought in a way that was impossible for a science bent upon the articulation and codification of general laws and patterns. When it explored the contradictions between objective knowledge and sensory experience, popular fiction exposed the fault-lines between knowing what a person is and how a person knows.

III. Detective Narrative, Sensational Narrative

Consolidated into a category of fiction termed the “sensation novel” by critics in the *Quarterly Review*, *North British Review*, and *Blackwood’s*, these popular novels were part of the same debate about sensation taking place in Victorian science. Critics

⁷¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 108. (This phrase echoed Watson’s identical description of Holmes in *The Sign of the Four*).

explicitly placed them within the framework of physiology and psychology (as well as morality, domesticity, and sexuality). What concerned these critics of sensation in fiction was not merely the scandalous subjects and their potential to morally corrupt readers; they feared that readers' nervous systems might be directly impacted by a form of fiction that could bypass cognitive control. Despite the reactionary nature of much of this criticism, it offered a surprisingly adept reading of what these novels were doing when they combined sensation and detection – sensory response and deliberate cognitive reflection. Henry Mansel, in his oft-cited article about the “disease” of sensation novels in an 1863 issue of *The Quarterly Review*, wrote that these novels could be “classified... according to the kind of sensation they are calculated to produce. There are novels of the warming-pan, and others of the galvanic-battery type—some which gently stimulate a particular feeling, and others which carry the whole nervous system by steam [*sic*].”⁷² Mansel and other contemporary critics feared that readers would respond to these novels with the immediacy of nerves. Much like the Victorian psychology that he casually adopted in his review, Mansel imagined that sensation – that ungovernable set of impulses and responses – might pose a threat to reasoned reflection and self-discipline. The underlying assumption was that rational thought and nervous response are alternative, but in some sense equivalently potent, ways of reading, knowing, or engaging with the world.

Mansel was right to suggest that sensation had the potential to override cognitive reflection, though his emphasis was on readers rather than on a theory of agency generated by these novels. Sensation-detective novels turned sensory bodies into narrative agents, undermining the association between narrative and cognitive control,

⁷² [Henry Mansel], “Sensation Novels,” *Quarterly Review* 113 no. 226 (April 1863): 487.

undermining the ability of detection to explain sensation, and affording sensation the narrative capacities usually associated with detective methods. In overt and sometimes heavy-handed ways, these popular novels exemplified and effected a change in the representational form of the Victorian novel and its method of narrating human psychology.

To claim that sensation-detective novels afforded narrative capacities to sensory bodies is to challenge a deep-rooted cultural and theoretical association of narrative with a detached mind, a consciousness that rises above material embodiedness and intentionally renders an account. A long tradition of narrative theory and novel criticism has regarded the body as the object rather than subject of narrative.⁷³ Literary criticism tends to understand narrative as what Frederic Jameson called “the central function or *instance* of the human mind.”⁷⁴ Consequently, even those critics who have done the most to develop theories of fictional narrative in light of Victorian physiology are hampered by an association of narrative with cognitive intention and awareness. In his essay “The Network of Nerves,” Nicholas Dames identifies the key problem for Victorian fiction as this: “How does one narrate a thoroughly embodied, material, nervous self?”⁷⁵ Sensation-detective novels engage with precisely this question, but not in the way Dames identifies. As we have seen, and as Dames also points out, Victorian

⁷³ This is a point emphasized by Daniel Punday, who calls for “a narrative theory organized around the human body.” He argues that “Too often the body is taken to be a simple object of narrative, a thing to be represented like a town or a table, with little thought given to how it participates in the construction of narrative plot, location, agency, and so on.” Daniel Punday, *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporal Narratology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 8; 7.

⁷⁴ Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2002), xiii. (Emphasis original.)

⁷⁵ Nicholas Dames, “1825-1880: The Network of Nerves,” in *Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English*, ed. David Herman (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 226.

physiological psychology teaches us that there are severe limits to what one can know about oneself because bodies and their automatic actions “know” more than an attentive mind. Because of this, writes Dames, the autobiographical self narrated in the first person is only able to scratch the surface of the sensory self, or what Lewes called “systematic consciousness.” This is why Victorian novels make such expansive use of omniscient narration, Dames argues. Thackeray, Eliot, and Trollope use omniscient narrators:

to elucidate what their characters themselves cannot, or at least to point out the mysteries of self-knowledge their characters are incapable of solving. This is so common an aspect of Victorian narration that it might virtually be called an interiority function: fictional selves are signaled as psychologically real to the extent that they are incapable of accurate introspection.⁷⁶

Dames offers us an insightful account of how physiological psychology impacts character in third-person realist novels.⁷⁷ But according to this logic, the act of narration always requires full and accurate knowledge of a psychological self; it is always detached and mind-centered, always representational. Dames’s argument shares the assumption of much scholarship on narrative in the Victorian novel: that narrative must somehow be attached to, or the product of, self-directed consciousness – of the third-person narrator if not the character.⁷⁸

But this association of narrative with a detached and immaterial consciousness is made counterintuitive by Victorian physiological psychology’s insistence that

⁷⁶ Ibid., 227.

⁷⁷ In the following chapter, I will dispute the applicability of this claim to George Eliot’s fiction. See especially chapter 4, page 233.

⁷⁸ In critiquing this isolated argument in Dames’s essay, I do not mean to critique Dames’s approach to the novel as a whole. On the contrary, this project owes a great deal of debt to Dames’s work on the Victorian novel form and its relationship to psychology, particularly his *Physiology of the Novel*. See my introduction, page 13.

consciousness itself is rooted in sensation. So pervasive is our association of narrative with detached cognition and with the continuity of a self through time that even recent cognitive science has yet to issue a clear challenge. Daniel Dennett and J. David Velleman, for instance, both explain the self as a narrative construct.⁷⁹ In *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999), António Damásio argues that organisms have multi-layered forms of consciousness, culminating in a human function of consciousness he names the “autobiographical self.”⁸⁰ Despite the fact that he describes this autobiographical consciousness as dependent upon neurology and biology, Damásio associates it with reason, intellect, and memory because it records and organizes a continuity and a history for the self; it writes a story as only a reasoning human individual can.

What Victorian sensation-detective novels realized, however, was that narrative – that is, the telling of a story concerning a series of experiences – could emerge directly from nerves and sensations. When D.A. Miller argues in his chapter on Collins’s *The Woman in White* that criticism has sidestepped sensation because “sensation is felt to occupy a natural site entirely outside meaning,” he argues for the relevance of sensation in criticism on the grounds that these novels forge a connection between reader and novel through the reader’s sensations.⁸¹ *The Woman in White*, Miller explains, “makes nervousness a metonymy for reading, its cause or effect.”⁸² But if sensational experience became a way of reading in the Victorian era, as Miller here posits and as Dames has explained in detail in *The Physiology of the Novel*, it also became a type of – or a metonym

⁷⁹ Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (London: Allen Lane, 1991); J. David Velleman, *Self to Self: Selected Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸⁰ António Damásio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 172-176.

⁸¹ Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 147.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 151.

for – narrative itself. Sensation offers an alternative to signification and representation because it disentangles narrative from a self-reflective function of mind. The sensation novel performs a split between the cognitive realm of representation and meaning, which it affords to an explanatory detective function, and the physical realm of feeling and impulse, which it conveys through an immanent sensory narrative. The narrative of a sensation novel signifies through sensation itself; it makes the reader nervous because it offers a narrative of the nerves.

Wilkie Collins's sensation-detective novels offer some of the clearest examples of what I am calling a sensory narrative. We might turn, for instance, to *The Law and the Lady* (1875), Collins's tale of a female detective, in which the monstrous monkey-like half-man, fantastically named Misserimus Dexter, has a turn for what he calls "dramatic narrative" that involves physically playing out his parts.⁸³ It is Dexter who tells the story that leads Valeria Woodville to the truth about her husband's ex-wife's death, but through an unconscious invocation of memory rather than an intentional explanation. And in *The Woman in White*, we discover Count Fosco's story – the novel's missing narrative – only because he reveals his membership in the secret Brotherhood despite the careful control he habitually exercises over himself. Sitting in the opera house, Hartright watches Fosco physically react to seeing Pesca, a fellow Brotherhood member: "There was no mistaking the change that passed over the villain's face. The leaden hue that altered his yellow complexion in a moment, the sudden rigidity of all his features... the motionless stillness of him from head to foot, told their own tale" (585). Despite his extraordinary control over animal impulses (as well as over his pet animals), Fosco has a body that thinks for itself and performs that thought for all to see. Hartright, the

⁸³ Wilkie Collins, *The Law and the Lady* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 332.

detective figure, may be the one to read Fosco's body language, but the emphasis here is not on the detective's interpretive prowess but on the sensational body's remarkable capacity to tell an unsanctioned story.

It is *The Moonstone* that most clearly illustrates how narrative comes to depend upon a singular body's storytelling – indeed, on its explicit performance of the gaps in a narrative provided by mere recollection. First the novel establishes an association between detection and narrative authority. Franklin Blake is our editor responsible for compiling the body of the text by assigning circumscribed narrative roles to those associated with the story of the moonstone. He takes part, alongside the butler Gabriel Betteredge, the insufferable Miss Clack, and the lawyer Mr. Bruff, in recounting the events which led up to the moonstone's mysterious disappearance. Explicitly making detection into a narrative function, *The Moonstone* locates “the right way of telling” the “strange family story” in a process of evidence-gathering that aims to turn multiple subjective accounts into an objective truth by erasing their particularity (7). The authoritative omniscient narrative has been transformed into Blake's editorial and interpretive role; he is to collect evidence and present it as testimony. So it is jarring when we – and Franklin – discover that such a carefully constructed detective narrative cannot tell the whole story and that Franklin must take on a very different narrative role. He has to turn from conscious memories to an alternative type of consciousness and allow his body – and its guiding “idea” or impulse – to prompt action that bypasses cognitive awareness. Giving up his editorial narrative control as well as his conscious will, he must let his body tell the story both of the diamond and of its own sensory behaviors.

The novel thus explicitly pits detective explanation and representation – retrospective technologies that require detachment and careful selection of what to include – against the creative ambiguities of sensation narrative. One of the earliest novelistic detectives, Sergeant Cuff, is brought into the novel to solve the mystery of the diamond’s disappearance. Significantly, he fails to accurately detect who committed the crime, a fact that Vanessa Ryan has perceptively put down to his reliance on an older model of the relationship between mind and body represented by physiognomy, or the assumption that one can read an individual’s disposition and character by scrutinizing external appearances: “With faith in physiognomy, Cuff does not probe beneath the surface of appearances, but relies upon it, and thus names the wrong suspect.”⁸⁴ Ryan is right to point to the physiognomic methodology of detection and to the novel’s juxtaposition of such a method with unconscious cerebration. However, her claim that this novel “mirrors the historical development from the earlier moment of physiognomy... to the newer physiological psychology” means that she interprets the productive tension between detection and sensation as progressive history.⁸⁵ As we have seen, an emphasis on methods of accurate observation that could pin down and make legible the workings of people’s bodies and minds was far from an outmoded methodology in the last quarter of the century. While physiognomy itself – increasingly criticized as pseudoscience and superstition – gave way to a physiology that was more interested in understanding the relationship between nerves and behaviors, the association between anatomical features and behavioral characteristics persisted

⁸⁴ Ryan, *Thinking Without Thinking*, 31. Ryan argues that Collins “breaks with decades of literary convention that since the late eighteenth century had increasingly made physiognomic descriptions commonplace in the novel. Physiognomic theory was useful to novelists, especially as a means of character description” (43).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

throughout the century in science and in literature, becoming even more prominent in late-century forensic science. This detective method of reading and interpreting the inside by observing the outside would expand as the detective story gained momentum over the next few decades. The detective would become what Conan Doyle termed “a calculating machine.” But the detectives in Victorian sensation fiction do not yet have the same success at detached objectivity as Sherlock Holmes. And we might admit that even Holmes, with his monomaniacal and sometimes frenetic methods (not to mention his dependency on cocaine), at times makes detection a function of sensory process rather than careful cognitive detachment. What sets sensation against detection in Collins’s novel is the introduction of an alternative account of human motivation, behavior, and action to the one provided by the explanatory functions of detection.

It would be far too simple to read the introduction of detection into the novel as an uncomplicated translation of a power-function from narrator to detective and his explanatory authority. When Patrick Brantlinger argues that detection appears in sensation novels as a replacement for a narrative omniscience that has been pushed to its limits, he simplifies the opposition between an untrustworthy third-person narrator and a trustworthy detective who can restore order and offer “some semblance of narrative omniscience.”⁸⁶ The implication is that a novel can only really work as a novel if it retains a narrative based on authority. What Brantlinger rightly, I believe, sees as the allocation of the narrative function to the detective in fact exposes the limitations of objectivity and narrative authority. Consider the poor success rate of detectives in Victorian sensation fiction. Inspector Bucket might discover who killed Tulkinghorn, but

⁸⁶ Patrick Brantlinger, “What is ‘Sensational’ About the ‘Sensation Novel’?” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 37 no.1 (1982): 16.

he cannot find Lady Dedlock in time to save her. Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone* might eventually predict the thief's identity (the second time around), but he plays no part in actually finding the thief, and his first guess is terribly wrong. When detectives do succeed in identifying a culprit or explaining a series of events it is usually only after they have altered their methods to pay attention to the singular behaviors of bodies and the stories they tell. In order to understand how, and to what effect, these novels reorganized the formal elements of fiction around the relationship between the narrative operations of sensation and detection, we need to recognize how the novel placed these operations into combination rather than into a hierarchical relationship.

The detection narrative in *The Moonstone* is predicated on the assumption that narrative is a cognitive act, one in which a person can write an accurate account by turning "personal experience" into "plain facts" (8). Each testimony has to extend "as far as our own personal experience extends, and no farther" in order to present a "record of the facts" without bias (8; 7). Where detection turns experience into a set of factual pieces of information stored in a person's memory and accessible upon command, sensation introduces an alternative type of experience, one belonging to an unpredictable body and one that is equally capable of telling a story. *The Moonstone* repeatedly introduces detection as the interpretive method that should explain away the sensational, from the mystery of the moonstone's disappearance to the strange behaviors of the Indians and their mesmeric boy, from the mysterious death of the servant girl Rosanna Spearman to the story of just how and why Franklin Blake stole a diamond in the middle of the night without remembering that he did it. But the novel also shows how detection fails because of its determination to explain mysteries as symptomatic of predictable, identifiable behaviors and events. Sergeant Cuff appears on the scene to solve the crime,

but he fails because instead of paying attention to the singularity of Rachel's behavior, he reads it as a symptom of a generalizable category – "other young ladies that I know of" who have "private debts" (164-65).

So one detective fails, and the novel summarily dismisses him from the scene only to bring in another type of detective: a physiologist. In Collins's direct nod to the parallels between sensation fiction and the debates about sensational bodies in physiology, Ezra Jennings steps into the novel to interpret the strange agency of bodies. He is successful in this endeavor to the extent that he does pay attention to the knowledge contained within single bodies; his detective work values the stories told by the bodies of Franklin Blake and Dr. Candy. But even though the experiment that dominates the novel comes straight out of science, the novel problematizes it as an explanatory tool and in doing so undercuts the detective sovereignty of the scientist. The observers of this experiment find they cannot read the knowledge and motives of the body they are tasked with watching and interpreting. The fact remains that Franklin's body was acting of its own accord, and that no scientific experiment can accurately access or reproduce his physiological memory; he does fetch the diamond again, but he falls asleep in the middle of the room before the onlookers can discover what he did with it. His body stubbornly refuses to play a part in the detective narrative's explanatory function, and scientific mastery of the body's memory is made impossible. The novel, like many others of its kind, problematizes detection as the interpretation of sensation even as it marshals that detection as the function of a society that strives for explanation and objective truth. If the physiological experiment remains the central scene of this novel despite the company's decision that "the purpose of the experiment is defeated," this is because it dramatizes the tension and the interplay between knowing a

body and a knowing body (424). It draws attention to a type of narrative rooted in the phenomenology of a character's sensory system, a story partially performed but not subservient to an authoritative interpretive account.

We might turn to any number of sensation-detective novels to find the same process by which the explanatory function of a detective narrative leads to the eruption of an alternative form of storytelling housed within a singular body and contrary to the detective's interpretive explanation. Take, for instance, *The Notting Hill Mystery*, a pseudonymously published novel from 1862 and a much better contender for the "first detective novel" than Collins's later *The Moonstone*. The novel is an account by a detective figure (an insurance investigator) offering evidence about just what caused the death of a baron's wife. On the last page of the novel, we read: "In possession of the evidence thus placed before you, your judgment of its result will be as good as mine."⁸⁷ The insurance investigator cannot provide the truth for his client; his judgment is ultimately that there is no way to prove whether any crime has been committed. The end is ambivalent because it brings us to a scene in which an apparently sleepwalking woman administers her own poison. Is she acting voluntarily? Does she know what she is doing? Is she being controlled by her husband, the baron, through mesmerism? The detective narrator cannot answer these questions because that story is contained within a sensory body whose actions cannot be interpreted from the outside and whose narrative will not be mastered by scientific or detective explanation.

In *The Moonstone*, Collins's dramatic physiological experiment is by no means the only instance of the narrative capacity of sensory bodies. The novel is filled with

⁸⁷ Charles Felix [Charles Warren Adams], *The Notting Hill Mystery*, in *Novels of Mystery from the Victorian Age* (New York: Pilot, 1946), 569.

instances of bodies telling stories without permission from the will of the storyteller. Much of the novel's appeal comes from the disjunction between what narrators claim about themselves in their first-person accounts and what is actually narrated. Miss Clack's portion of the story is the most obvious example: her repeated references to her own virtue, to her chaste respect for Godfrey Abelwhite, and to her "sacred regard for truth" are transparently false and do little to paper over her unintentional self-portrait (194). Instances in which explanation gives way to physiological narrative abound. For instance, when Franklin discovers his own name written on the nightgown hidden by Rosanna Spearman, he finds himself unable to continue his detective narrative:

I have not a word to say about my own sensations. My impression is, that the shock inflicted on me completely suspended my thinking and feeling power... Of what was said between us on the beach, I have not the faintest recollection. The first place in which I can now see myself again plainly is the plantation of firs. Betteredge and I are walking back together to the house. (307)

Indicating the impossibility of a continued explanatory narrative, this scene ostensibly claims to offer an after-the-fact "picture" of Franklin's "state of complete bodily and mental prostration" (308). But in fact it shifts from the past to the present tense, allowing an immanent sensory narrative to take over: "I feel gratefully the coolness and shadiness and quiet of the room. I drink the grog... it strings up my nerves..." (308).

In a novel so concerned with the accuracy of its detective narrative, we come to find that most of the significant stories we are told are narrated without intention. Gabriel Betteredge finds that, after a chapter of narration, "this don't look much like starting the story of the Diamond – does it? I seem to be wandering off in search of Lord knows what... We will take a new sheet of paper, if you please, and begin over again" (9). His determination to control the narrative with the force of will is ineffectual, for a

chapter later he bemoans: “I am asked to tell the story of the Diamond, and, instead of that, I have been telling the story of my own self. Curious, and quite beyond me to account for. I wonder whether the gentlemen who make a business and a living out of writing books, ever find their own selves getting in the way of their subjects, like me?” (13). Musing on the impossibility of maintaining authorial distance from the subject of narrative, Betteredge finds that this self that keeps cropping up in his narrative – much like Esther’s Summerson’s “little body” – has the clumsy materiality of an object that gets in the way.⁸⁸

Amid the narrative testimonies that make up this novel, others who have much to say but are afforded no narrative role nevertheless tell their stories through sensory performances. Rachel Verinder’s body enacts this duality between what she consciously avows – a determination to avoid Franklin – and what she unconsciously performs. She moves towards Franklin to embrace him “as if acting under some influence independent of her own will,” knowing him to have perpetrated a terrible crime against her (338). In Rachel’s automatic behavior – her body’s willfulness – Collins demonstrates that physiology can be a more reliable storyteller than the beliefs and determinations that guide voluntary action. Her body, it seems, knows best and enacts its own version of the truth. Similarly, Mr. Candy’s body provides his much-needed confession that he drugged Franklin on the night of the birthday party. This intended narrative confession,

⁸⁸ Betteredge is not the only narrator in this novel who has trouble keeping control of the narrative. Even Miss Clack admits her tendency to find her narrative intentions waylaid: “I beg a thousand pardons. I have fallen insensibly into my Sunday-school style. Most inappropriate in such a record as this” (195). Similarly, in Rosanna Spearman’s letter to Franklin Blake, she writes: “I ask your pardon, once more, for this wandering of my pen,” attributing the agency of this “wandering” to the pen rather than her intentions (324).

For the passage from *Bleak House* concerning Esther’s narrative and her “little body” that refuses to “fade into the background,” see the first page of my introduction.

which would have been a product of pre-planned mental determination had Mr. Candy not fallen ill, is replaced by the unconscious disclosure of his body and its fevered repetitions. The words “dropped from [his] lips” during his illness and are transcribed by Ezra Jennings as part of his physiological research (382). In this scene Collins’s novel offers us an important alternative to those studies of sensation fiction that have tended to stress the pathology of sensational performances. Jennings reads Mr. Candy’s delirium not as symptom of pathology (which would be to claim diagnostic and narrative authority for himself), but as a productive expression of narrative: “It has often occurred to me in the course of my medical practice, to doubt whether we can justifiably infer – in cases of delirium – that the loss of the faculty of speaking connectedly, implies of necessity the loss of the faculty of thinking connectedly as well” (369). And this is important, because if we refuse to diagnose such nervous narratives as pathological we begin to see that their lack of mind-centered control is not a lack at all; it is a reallocation of storytelling capacity to the creative potential of sensory consciousness.

Where the detective or the medical practitioner has to *explain* (diagnose, interpret, and account for) sensation narrates. This opposition between explanation and narration is informed by but alters the opposition offered by Lukács between narration and description. The narratives of singular bodies are experiential, but they are also immediate, immersive, and fluid; they do not require what Lukács calls a “necessary distance” that “permits the selection of the essential after the action.”⁸⁹ Sensory

⁸⁹ Georg Lukács, “Narrate or Describe,” *Writer & Critic and Other Essays* (New York: Merlin, 1970), 129. For Lukács, narration provides “the perspective necessary for the selection of details essential for revealing the effects of events and people”; it takes place after the fact with a type of retrospective omniscience that differs from description’s superfluous detail. Description, Lukács argues, makes the reader into a “‘contemporary’ observer” who has no perspective on the events or people described but is bombarded by “superficial details” (129).

narratives show that causation and explanation are necessary only to the representation of human behavior from a detached authoritative position; they are not necessary components of experience itself. Nor are they synonymous with narrative itself, for sensory narratives are able to stage sensation directly. In this sense sensation novels anticipate both William James's theory of emotion, in which immediate sensory response precedes any consciousness of emotion, and the embodied theory of affect that he influenced.⁹⁰ Affective response removes mental causation and identification as necessary components of feeling. When Walter Hartright feels a touch on his arm, his sensory response and the narrative of that response is immediate: "in one moment, every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop by the touch of a hand laid lightly and suddenly on my shoulder from behind me" (20). The sensation and its narrative begin immediately; Hartright only names the physical cause for his sensation after the physiological reaction.

Conversely, science and detection aim for a type of explanation that renders the body knowable according to a stable category of meaning. It is explanation that requires what Lukács called "necessary distance." The sensation-detection novel marks a shift that addresses the representational limits of epistemological narrative. The impulse to master the body's knowledge and to use narrative to represent that knowledge – an impulse integrated into the project of the realist novel – was translated and codified in the popular novels of the 1860s and 70s into the form of detection. Reducing narrative omniscience and authority into the (often belated, sometimes inaccurate) explanatory account of the detective, these novels portrayed the limitations of objectivity,

⁹⁰ For more on James's theory of sensory response, see chapter 4, page 256. For more on the embodied theories of affect that influence my work, see chapter 1, notes 79 and 80, and chapter 2, note 92.

detachment, and epistemological authority. In the detective's encounter with sensory material he cannot quite explain, the novel staged the eruption of non-representational types of narrative associated with a body that cannot be known as a stable object because it is continually reconfiguring itself, evading taxonomies and representational systems, and exceeding the diagnostic procedures of science and detection. In the sensation novel, even detection can become a sensory experience.

IV. Detective Fever and *Lady Audley's Secret*

When Robert Audley in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* suspects his new aunt, Lady Audley, of murder, he sets out to collect evidence in order to prove that she was behind the disappearance of his friend George Talboys. Expounding theories about "circumstantial evidence" and constructing his own "chains of evidence," Robert ostensibly practices what he describes as "the science of the detective officer."⁹¹ He collects material evidence in the form of letters, interviews witnesses, and matches dates and times. But there is nothing objective or detached about Robert's detection. Rather, its source is what the narrator calls the "vague feeling of terror which had taken possession of him immediately upon losing sight of his friend" (254). In fact, as he pursues his quest to collect evidence against Lady Audley, Robert begins to recognize that detection and sensation might collapse into one another and become the same thing:

"Why did that unaccountable terror seize upon me," he thought. "Why was it that I saw some strange mystery in my friend's disappearance? Was it a monition, or a monomania? What if I am wrong after all? What if this chain of evidence which I have constructed link by link, is woven out of my own folly? What if this edifice of horror and suspicion is a mere

⁹¹ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 220; 120. Subsequent references to this novel will be cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

collection of crochets—the nervous fancies of a hypochondriachal bachelor?... Oh, my God, if it should be in myself all this time that the misery lies.” (254)

Robert fears that his detective work might be a product not of his own intention and control, but rather a symptom of insanity or monomania and thus initiated by impulses within his body. He describes his intentions and his impulses as at odds with one another: “If I *could* let the matter rest; if—if I could leave England for ever, and purposefully fly from the possibility of ever coming across another clue to the secret, I would do it... but I *cannot*! A hand which is stronger than my own beckons me on” (172). That “hand” is an internal impulse rather than an external force. In Braddon’s novel the operations of detection arise out of and threaten to again become sensory, physiological, nervous.

Lady Audley’s Secret offers one of the clearest – if by no means the only – example of how sensation, because not under the control of a purely mental function, strikes a fine line between pathology (nervousness as insanity) and knowledge (nervousness as the source of detective capacity). It posits feeling as a viable alternative to thought. Robert fears that his discoveries would be worthless if they were based upon sensory response, but we come to understand that it is precisely because his detective work is based upon a knowledge rooted in sensation that it can tell the story of George and Lady Audley. Despite his belief that George has taken the train to London, Robert cannot quell his feelings, which appear to contradict his will and awareness: “in spite of Robert’s unqualified admiration of [Lady Audley], the barrister could not overcome a vague feeling of uneasiness on this quiet September evening... still Robert’s thoughts wandered, in spite of himself, to George Talboys” (86).

Robert's reaction to Lady Audley is not all that dissimilar to the reaction of Caesar the dog to Lady Audley's presence: "the animal cowered down by the side of his mistress with a suppressed growl. There was something in the manner of the dog which was, if anything, more indicative of terror than of fury, incredible as it appears that Caesar should be frightened of so fragile a creature as Lucy Audley" (103). And Robert is not the only one to react involuntarily; Lady Audley herself displays feelings unintentionally at moments in the narrative where she finds herself confronted with past events. "She gave a little nervous shudder" upon mention of George Talboys (87); her body displays its history – she has "a bruise upon her delicate skin" (87), and she displays "[a] sudden change" in her facial features when pursued by Robert: "the pretty roseate flush faded out from her cheeks, and left them waxen white, and angry flashes lightened in her blue eyes" (139). Her body tells a story about her feelings: "Faint shadows of green and crimson fell upon my lady's face from the painted escutcheons in the mullioned window by which she sat; but every trace of the natural colour of that face had faded out, leaving it a ghastly grey" (120). It is an ambiguous story since the colors that play upon Lady Audley's face are reflections from the outside, but her body oscillates throughout the novel between a representation (a "mask" [145]) of which she is master and a performance over which she has no control.

Robert will diagnose Lady Audley as mad, but the novel is not content to discredit her sensory behaviors on that basis: "The lady is not mad," claims the doctor who examines her. "She has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence... She is dangerous!" (379). What makes Lady Audley so dangerous is that she allows her mind to give way to her body's compulsions: "My worst wickednesses have been the result of wild impulses, and not of deeply-laid plots" (297). Her impulses

have her “in so strong a spell that neither her mind nor her body seemed to have any consciousness” of her physical state (314). Lady Audley will also accuse Robert of insanity to her husband: “Robert Audley is mad... The disappearance of his friend, George Talboys, grieved and bewildered him. He dwelt upon this one idea until he lost the power of thinking of anything else. The one idea looked at perpetually became distorted to his mental vision” (287). Her diagnosis is partly correct – Robert does dwell perpetually upon the one idea of his friend’s disappearance – and in labeling him insane Lady Audley seeks to pathologize the basis of Robert’s discoveries and thereby discredit the knowledge those discoveries have afforded him.

That these characters will vie for the power to affix the label of madness onto each other epitomizes the authority of diagnosis, of the explanatory function of detection that reads all unpredictable sensory behavior as symptomatic of a generalizable pathological category (one which lands Lady Audley in a mad house at the end of the novel). At the same time, however, the novel also demonstrates the capacity of sensory experiences and fleeting bodily impulses to become the driving force of both the story that calls for detection and the process of detection that seeks to tell that story. This novel diagnoses madness not as pathology but as a feature of normative sensation:

Who has not felt, in the first madness of sorrow, an unreasoning rage... We want to root up gigantic trees in a primeval forest, and to tear their huge branches asunder in our convulsive grasp... Mad-houses are large and only too numerous; yet surely it is strange they are not larger, when we think of how many helpless wretches must beat their brains against this hopeless persistency of the orderly outward world, as compared with the storm and tempest, the riot and confusion within: -- when we remember how many minds must tremble upon the narrow boundary between reason and unreason, mad to-day and sane to-morrow, mad yesterday and sane to-day. (205)

Braddon reads madness as Henry Maudsley would 18 years later in his study of mental disease. In his preface to the third edition of the second part of *The Pathology of Mind* in 1880, Maudsley added chapters on sleepwalking and dreaming because, he argued, pathology should not be isolated from psychology and physiology; these studies should instead “throw light upon and give help to one another.”⁹² By extricating madness from abnormality, *Lady Audley's Secret* identifies its potential to offer a way of knowing that can rival, and even become, a type of detective work.

By making detection into a sensory experience, then, sensation novels put the methods of explanation, stable knowledge, and objectivity on shaky ground. Detection and sensation, like objectivity and subjectivity, converge as the cast of characters in *The Moonstone* comes down with what Betteredge repeatedly refers to as “detective fever.” What Robert Audley calls the “links of steel in the wonderful chain forged by the science of the detective officer” are still not enough to explain Lady Audley’s “secret”; something else is needed (120). Lady Audley has to be pushed to the point at which she will again commit a criminal act – arson in an attempt to kill Robert – in a state of “madness” in which she becomes “a person who has yielded to the dominant influence of some overpowering excitement” (313). Throughout this novel, sensory actions and bodily behaviors are the driving force of narrative. *Lady Audley's Secret* does not so much use detection to solve the mysteries of sensation as it does use detection to deepen those mysteries.

⁹² Henry Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind* (New York: Appleton, 1880), v-vi.

V. Detection and Excess

At the end of the nineteenth century, the renowned eugenicist Francis Galton developed his ultimate method of forensic “detection”: composite portraiture. By collating exposures of multiple individuals into a single image of a “type” (the criminal, the Jew, and so on), Galton created composite portraiture to make bodies stable and legible through representation and prediction (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). Galton’s methods offer a visual exaggeration of the methodological aim of science and detection in the Victorian period – to pin down and predict human behavior based upon generalized categories and patterns. But they also offer a visual analogue for the argument I have been making about the novel: that sensation and detection narratives work side by side – here in visual form. I conclude this chapter by turning to the very end of the century and to Galton’s methods of representation because they show us how, in the nineteenth century, sensory excess emerges out of the very methods that seek to contain sensation and particularity.



Figure 5: Galton, *Prevalent Types of Features Among Men Convicted of Larceny*, 1880



Figure 6: *Galton, Criminal Composite*
(New York Public Library/Science Photo Library <http://sciencephoto.com>)

Translating Victorian physiology's tendency to identify patterns and generic categories of behavior into a formal forensic method, Galton sought to use photography to render these categories visible by vastly expanding the physiognomic tradition of identifying character by physical traits. This was by no means his first foray into detective methods; he had adapted Alphonse Bertillion's system of anthropometry – the measurement and classification of criminals according to their physical characteristics – to develop a method of fingerprint classification that operated “as an organized means

of detection.”⁹³ Composite portraiture, by superimposing many photographs of individuals, created what Galton called “a method of obtaining *pictorial averages*.”⁹⁴ He aimed to represent common features in sharper outline and leave individual features to blend into the ghostly background. Of course this visual type was the result of Galton’s own *a priori* classification; he carefully selected the individual faces he would combine to produce his composites, discarding those that had any “marked peculiarity” and did not “conform well” with the others.⁹⁵ But Galton believed this technique of optical generalization could work as a predictive mechanism; he attempted to make physiological patterns or repetitions visible in order to establish the representational relationship between the human body and its behavioral tendencies.

In what at first might appear to be the most extreme form of what Daston and Galison call “mechanical objectivity,” Galton’s composite images confront us once more with the limits of detection as claims empirical mastery over the biological body and its impulses by means of a norm or stable logical truth. For Galton, the beauty of the composite was its ability to erase all individual differences in the production of a visible norm, as well as its reliable capacity to render that visual image without the biases inherent in the brain’s equivalent process. As Allan Sekula explains, the composite makes the statistical into an optical procedure; it produces what James Emmott calls “a visual form for the principle of permanence.”⁹⁶ In other words, Galton based his composite method on the brain’s ability to collate instances into types, but he believed he was perfecting that procedure by removing it from the unpredictability of bodily

⁹³ Francis Galton, *Finger Prints* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 131.

⁹⁴ Francis Galton, “Composite Portraiture,” *Photographic Journal* 5 (1881): 144, emphasis original.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (1986): 3-64; James Emmott, “Vibration, Capture, and the Layering of Voices and Faces,” *Victorian Studies* 53 no.3 (2011): 475.

processes. Detection responded to sensation by the impulse to eradicate its traces. Composite photography, like the most objective forms of detection and physiology, paid attention to what might go on beneath a body's surface only in order to gain epistemological mastery over it. It failed to recognize what sensation novels had made clear: each person's body is a constantly-changing bundle of sensory processes that cannot be rendered static and represented by way of a stable signifier.

Sensation novels value precisely what detection attempts to screen out: evidence of physiological agency. We might say that sensation provides its own solution to the problem of knowing the body, for it is precisely by paying attention to their physiological forebodings, impulses, and strange feelings that detective figures like Robert Audley and Walter Hartright are able, eventually, to locate the missing connections in their evidentiary chains – the gaps in narrative that can only be filled by feeling. The physiological performances that express sensation force detection to redirect its empirical gaze from pursuit of evidence that fits a stable set of categories onto the *singular* traits of each body and how it performs. And the same was true in science.

Galton's composite portraits are most telling in the excess information that they try but fail to completely erase – the features peculiar to each individual. If Galton's composites produce a visual image of the norm, they also fail to keep out the deviations from that norm, which are represented by what he referred to as the "blur" or "ghost of a trace of individual peculiarities" in the image.⁹⁷ Galton attributed this blur not only to the singularities of the bodies included in the composite, but also to the tendency in the brain of an observer to concentrate too much on variation: "in our general impressions far too great weight is attached to what is strange and marvellous," he wrote. "Our

⁹⁷ Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 10.

mental generic composites are rarely defined; they have that blur in excess which photographic composites have in a small degree.”⁹⁸ Galton believed that he had created a process that would counteract this blurring effect, or at least make its singularities subordinate to the type. But it is these blurs and ghosts that stand out to the viewer. And it is in these elements of excess – in the ghost of singularity – that we begin to recognize a body-in-motion that cannot be pinned down and made completely visible except as a type. This newly constituted, representative body is not actually a person at all; it is no one, a fictional image. We see in the composite portrait a visual representation of the incompatibility between the individual’s sensory singularities and detective attempts to know the body, between the subject and the object of knowledge. Ironically, Galton began to pay attention to the value of this ghost of singularity late in his career, but only by characteristically attempting to make it visible by a process of what he called “analytical photography” that would invert the composite and “show only the differences between portraits.”⁹⁹ He gave up on this attempt to “isolate the particulars” because the “ghastly” result appeared to offer no useful information.¹⁰⁰ The ghost of the singular, a sensational body’s fleeting traces of difference and change, continued to resist detection by telling its own stories, but also to demand detection’s adaptation: new ways of narrating, knowing, and sensing.

As in Galton’s composites, so in the novel, for fiction had been transformed by the combination of sensation and detection. In the *fin-de-siècle* Romance Revival the excessive performances of singular bodies and their challenges to authoritative, mind-centered control would be made formally dangerous, most obviously in Robert Louis

⁹⁸ Francis Galton, “Generic Images,” *Proceedings of the Royal Institution* 9 (1879): 169.

⁹⁹ Francis Galton, “Analytical Photography,” *Photographic Journal* 25 (1900): 136.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Galton, “Analytical Portraiture [Letter],” *Nature* 62 (1900): 320.

Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). These novels make explicit the formal divisions between a self-contained self under the watchful eye of one's own detective faculties and the fleeting and unpredictable behaviors of a sensory self. They stage the battle between a scientific or epistemological impulse to control, to know, and to predict, and a creative and even reckless impulse to act according to immanent needs, desires, and passions. These late gothic romances demonstrate how the combination of sensation and detection in popular fiction had transformed the possibilities of realist fiction and began to make way for a modernist narrative form that would dissolve the barriers between consciousness and narration. The formal dynamics that set sensation and detection in opposition to one another in popular fiction were not confined to sensation fiction or the detective novel; the ripples of this formal opposition spread outwards into canonical and realist fiction. What the sensation-detective novel accomplished by challenging and offering alternatives to objective, scientific accounts of human behavior changed how authors in the realist tradition could write about the experience of being a person. As the next and final chapter will demonstrate, the influence of the sensation novel and its experiments with scientific thought and methodology called for a new way of conceiving the self-consciousness of an individual in novel form.

CHAPTER FOUR

Daniel Deronda's Experiments in Life

*Attempts at description are stupid:
who can all at once describe a human being?*

George Eliot's interest in the relationship between literature and science is nowhere more apparent than on the first page of her final novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876). The first chapter opens with an epigraph comparing the scientist and the poet, or novelist, both of whom intervene in the processes of life to "fix" a point of beginning *in medias res*:

Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars' unceasing journey... His less accurate grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his.¹

A metaphor that will return in later epigraphs, this oft-read passage draws attention to the parallels between narration and scientific theory as they both use fictional ("make-believe") formal devices (beginnings, middles, and ends) in order to construct explanations (science) or narratives (literature).²

¹ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (London: Penguin, 2003), 7. Subsequent page number references to this novel will be cited parenthetically in the text.

² For other extensive readings of this opening epigraph, see, for instance, Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1983), 188-192; Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1; 176-178. George Levine, *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 177-78. Beer reads the epigraph as emphasizing the

Set up as we are to read the beginning of *Daniel Deronda* as a point “fixed” by a narrator, its first paragraph of narrative – a series of questions about an as-yet unnamed woman – appears all the more significant for its lack of fixedness:

Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as a coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents?

She who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda’s mind was occupied in gambling. (7)

The first paragraph makes us aware that the body in question is an expressive instrument and cannot be read, as the epigraph might suggest, from the same perspective and with the same detached precision as an astronomer might read the movements of the planets. When we defer to the epigraph’s request that we pay attention to beginnings we find that this particular beginning stages on a small scale Eliot’s use of third-person narrative to demonstrate how scientific objectivity collapses into subjective phenomenology. To look at Gwendolen’s body is not to know her state of mind. Indeed the act of looking at and trying to interpret her body collapses epistemology into phenomenology because whoever asks these questions does so not out of “consent,” or a cognitive and rational point of view, but out of a “felt...coercion,” a bodily compulsion. The novel begins by destabilizing its own separation of interpretive observation and subjective experience.

“insufficiency” of both poetry and science (188). Shuttleworth highlights the “shared need for imaginative construction” (1) and reads the epigraph in terms of Eliot’s “challenges to the dominant assumptions of the realist text” (175). She also claims that the epigraph is drawn from Bernard Fontenelle’s *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes* (1686). Levine reads the epigraph in order to that “the strongest realist truth is that its narratives are fictions” (177).

To the first paragraph's five questions we might add one more that is unwritten but implied: Who is asking? Lacking quotation marks, this first paragraph has no mediated introduction and therefore no "person" to whom the narrative is attached. Blurring the boundaries that the next few paragraphs will separate out into first, second, and third persons – narrator, reader, and characters – Eliot begins by drawing attention to literary form and to the necessary (but initially missing) association between narrative and person. Is the questioner the narrative "I" who will subsequently address the reader? Or do the questions belong to the reader, the implied second-person "you" of the narrative, as guides with which to enter this story? They could even be attributed to the object of the questions herself, Gwendolen, who will imagine and project the questions as motivating Daniel's "measuring gaze" (13). The uncertainty of this first paragraph appears to be explained and contained by the beginning of the second, which attaches the questions to a person and establishes them "in Daniel Deronda's mind." Entering into a third-person narrator's discourse, we are asked to retrospectively read the first paragraph as free indirect narrative of the title character's "inward debate" (10).³

Daniel Deronda uses free indirect discourse to indicate two possible ways in which narrative constructs subjectivity. On the one hand, the novel places us directly inside the mind of a character, offering us his thoughts as they occur as if in the present moment, without even the mediation of a narrative introduction. This first paragraph narrates subjectivity as phenomenological. It sets up our expectation that Eliot's novel will represent the internal life of a person who experiences himself as a conscious being, since the experience of being a self is narrated from within self-consciousness. This is

³ Gillian Beer similarly reads this epigraph in terms of its "teasing formal relationships," arguing that "George Eliot signals from the outset that the source of authoritative statement is to be problematized." *Darwin's Plots*, 192.

just one of the accomplishments of free indirect style: by removing the clause structure and punctuation that mark off a first-person narrator from a third-person character, free indirect discourse combines the two persons. Free of formal constraints, story and discourse momentarily merge to constitute a present moment. Free indirect style is the dominant formal mode used by Eliot's narrator to present the interiority of the novel's two protagonists, Daniel and Gwendolen. We might assume, then, that what Eliot accomplishes with free indirect style, despite the assumed distance of a so-called "omniscient" narrator, is a type of phenomenological rendering of individual experience similar to Charlotte Brontë's treatment of Lucy Snowe. By dissolving the narrative perspective into that of the character, the author's free indirect explorations of mental experience would seem to become an immanent and tactical narration of subjective experience.

However, as Dorrit Cohn has pointed out, free indirect discourse can also achieve quite the opposite relationship between story and discourse. Rather than collapse narrator and character into one, it can create immense distance between them when the apparent closeness of narrated and narrative consciousness masks the ironic distance that indicated the narrative mastery of a Flaubert or an Austen.⁴ By following

⁴ Cohn argues that the "imitation" of what he terms "narrated monologue" "implies two basic possibilities: fusion with the subject, in which the actor identifies with, 'becomes' the person he imitates, or distance from the subject, a mock-identification that leads to caricature. Accordingly, there are two divergent directions open to the narrated monologue, depending on which imitative tendency prevails: the lyric and the ironic." Dorrit Cohn, "Narrated Monologue: Definition of a Fictional Style," *Comparative Literature* 18 (1966): 110-11. See also Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), in which he describes Eliot as an author who likes to engage in "psycho-narration" in which she "interrupt[s her] characters' thoughts by expansive glosses" (38).

The most notorious example of this distancing in FID is found in Jane Austen's free indirect narrative of Emma Woodhouse's erroneous speculations, in which the narrator's enactment of Emma's thoughts is laced with ironic judgment. See Clara Tuite, *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 67-71.

the opening series of questions with a sentence that deposits them inside Daniel's mind, the narrator's lays bare the means by which she makes that mind: "She who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda's mind was occupied in gambling." In flaunting her mastery of the situation, the narrator converts what might otherwise be considered a thinking subject into an object of narrative attention. The "She" in this sentence is not only Gwendolen, but also the narrator, who draws attention to the stakes of representing and experimenting with Daniel's mental life. Daniel's mind enters the story not as the originator of these questions about Gwendolen but as the passive recipient of a power to attract attention that the narrative has already used on us. The moment he owns these thoughts, Daniel is triply "coerc[ed]" – first, by the feelings of his own body that compel him to "look again" at Gwendolen; second, by Gwendolen and her coercive ability to draw the gaze and raise questions; and finally by the narrator who most explicitly "raise[s] these questions in Daniel's Deronda's mind." To *think* in the wake of physiological and associationist psychology is to be, in effect, subject to the stimulation of the material and associative properties of one's own body, to the stimulation of a social and sensory milieu, and above all, to the explanations of an expert in psychology, a narrator who claims to know your mind better than you do.

By the time George Eliot wrote *Daniel Deronda*, the form of the novel had already undergone significant changes as it fashioned new ways of narrating the form of a person as a responsive physiological self. We have seen that Brontë's first-person narratives began to break down the notion of a self-contained consciousness capable of understanding itself as a stable center of knowledge by prying the objectivity of the strategic narrative person from the subjectivity of the tactical experiences that create that person. Third-person narrative expands this separation by dividing narrating person

("I") and narrated person ("he" and "she"). In doing so, it pre-supposes the division between objective and subjective knowledge and privileges the narrative point of view as the source of stable and accurate information. It is perhaps tempting to conclude, as Nicholas Dames does, that the prevalence of third-person "omniscient" narration in Victorian fiction is a response to the recognition, fueled by advances in psychology, that a person cannot know or narrate him or herself. We have seen that, for Dames, Eliot's (and Thackeray's and Trollope's) narrative omniscience provides an "interiority function" that lets us know the workings of characters' minds, since those characters cannot know themselves.⁵ In other words, the third-person narrator can know the minds of her characters much like the psychologist can know his subjects.

But we have already seen that narrative is not solely a product of cognitive control in the Victorian novel; it can be the product of sensory selves and their fleeting feelings. Because third-person narration separates itself from the experience narrated, discourse from story, it implicitly claims to know the experiential subject from the outside – that is, as an object. Eliot exploits the potential of free indirect discourse within third-person narrative as the means of challenging the difference between interiority and exteriority and highlighting the mutual impingement of subjectivity and objectivity that prevents us from understanding them either as a binary dualism or as parallel phenomena. Eliot's novels push the transformation of person I have traced through

⁵ For Dames, the popularity of omniscient narration in Victorian novels is a response to the implications of physiological psychology for self-knowledge. He reads in omniscient narratives of Victorian fiction "the sign of an ontological split between the knowing voice of narration, which cannot properly possess a psychology at all, and the psychologies of characters, which are continually belied by their words." Because of this split, "The Victorian fictional narrator has even more work to do given the necessary self-ignorance of even the most emotionally acute characters." Nicholas Dames, "1825-1880: The Network of Nerves," *Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English*, ed. David Herman (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 227; 229. See chapter 3, page 203.

Brontë, Dickens, and the sensation novel one step further when they use third-person narration to create a form of self-consciousness that synthesizes scientific objectivity and novelistic phenomenology. By making the process of turning the person into an object of knowledge an on-going and always-changing aspect of that person's conscious experience, Eliot accomplished in the novel what William James would accomplish more than a decade later in psychology.

I. Eliot, Psychology, and the Novel

When she wrote *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot was responding not only to revisions of a traditional person by the sciences of physiology and psychology but also to the formal innovations with which previous novelists had been involved in those changes. Scholars have made a point of showing that Eliot was deeply embedded in the same intellectual milieu as many of the most prominent thinkers in the human sciences. During her lifetime, readers understood her as part of a discourse on the nature and ethics of human thought and action.⁶ In the last three decades, criticism – from Gillian Beer's groundbreaking study of evolutionary narrative forms to book-length analyses of Eliot and scientific theories – has placed Eliot's novels in conversation with Victorian science.⁷

⁶ See, for instance, psychologist James Sully's 1881 article about Eliot in *Mind*, in which he writes of Eliot's "scientific insight into character and life." James Sully, "George Eliot's Art," *Mind* 6 (1881): 378. For an in-depth analysis of how Sully reads Eliot's fiction as a direct influence on science, see chapter 7 ("Novels for Psychologists") of Vanessa Ryan, *Thinking Without Thinking in the Victorian Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 153-167. Eliot's fiction was viewed as a contribution to philosophy as well as psychology in the nineteenth century. For instance, the Harper & Brothers' List of Publications in 1880 summarized her novels by noting: "George Eliot is at the same time novelist and philosopher." *Harper & Brothers' Descriptive List of their Publications with Trade-List Prices* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880), 9.

⁷ See Beer, *Darwin's Plots*; Levine, *Dying to Know*; Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*; Michael Davis, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology: Exploring the Unmapped Country*. (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2006). See also Ian Duncan, "George Eliot and the

In particular Eliot's novels have been compared to the work of her partner, George Henry Lewes, and friend, Herbert Spencer.⁸ Provocative though I find it, this way of reading Eliot's work as a fictional engagement with or enactment of scientific ideas frequently undervalues how Eliot conducted very different *experiments* with human psychology, ones that, unlike that psychology, emphasized the subjective experiences that make up self-consciousness.

In addition to an intimate familiarity with the scientific theory of her day, Eliot had an equal familiarity with philosophy, particularly moral philosophy. Thus it is not all that surprising that she used the novel form to stake out a very different goal from her scientific colleagues in experimenting with human subjectivity. For Lewes and Spencer, as for Carpenter and Bain, the preferred method of study was objective observation and experimentation, using test cases to collate information, studying physiology and recording nervous actions, in order to understand what Lewes called "the human mind, not... any individual mind."⁹ Physiological psychologists were not interested in the conscious experience of individual people; they sought instead to identify patterns and laws of behavior that pertained to the (normal) human person and, by extension, to all human persons. When Eliot conceived of her novels as "a set of experiments in life – an endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable

Science of the Human," in *A Companion to George Eliot*, ed. Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw, 471-485 (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley, 2013).

⁸ For critical accounts that read Eliot's work in relation to that of Lewes and Spencer, see in particular Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*; Michael Davis, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology*; Nancy Paxton, *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Richard Menke, "Fiction as Vivisection: G. H. Lewes and George Eliot," *ELH* 67 no.2 (2000): 617-53.

⁹ George Henry Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind: Problem the First, The Study of Psychology, its Object, Scope, and Method* (London: Trubner, 1879), 96.

of," she implied that such "experiments" could only be conducted in and by literature.¹⁰ She evidently believed that only the novel could thoroughly explore "thought and emotion" as subjective phenomena. Eliot used her novels to show how a person experiences him or herself as an entity always shaped by laws of physiology, mind, environment, and society beyond his or her control, and yet, at the same time, as a discrete, self-conscious, and continuous self.¹¹

Daniel Deronda consequently challenges one of the foundational tenets of Lewes's psychology: the notion that subjectivity and objectivity are two parallel aspects of a single phenomenon. For Spencer, Lewes, and Henry Maudsley, in varying degrees, this parallelism justified their basing a psychology upon physiological study.¹² Lewes aimed

¹⁰ George Eliot, "Letter from George Eliot to Joseph Frank Payne," January 25, 1876, in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 6: 1874-1877, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), 440.

¹¹ My reading of Eliot's relationship to psychology departs from that offered by Michael Davis in his study of Eliot and psychology. Davis's reading of Eliot stresses multiplicity and elucidates a wealth of details about Eliot's relationship to the psychology of her day, but at times he pushes this emphasis on detailed comparison to the point of indeterminacy: "Rather than proposing any one scientific theory of consciousness or the unconscious, however, she uses fiction as a medium through which to dramatize and to reflect upon their varied possibilities, for good or ill, and to convey a sense of the complex, often problematic relationship between the two." *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology*, 158-59.

¹² Lewes both defended the introspective method and sidelined it to objective observation in his *Problems of Life and Mind*. He claimed first that "I range myself neither on the side of those who proclaim Introspection the only valid source of psychological knowledge, nor of those who contemptuously dismiss it, and rely solely on Observation of external appearances" (82). But for psychology to "formulate the laws of the human mind, and not simply classify the individual states," it is necessary for the psychologist to "quit Introspection for Observation. We must study the mind's operations in its expressions, as we study electrical operations in their effects" (99).

Spencer, in his *Principles of Psychology*, argued that a science of psychology could not in fact exist "without borrowing its data from subjective Psychology." He thus argued that, "until it acknowledges its indebtedness to subjective Psychology, objective Psychology cannot legitimately use any terms that imply consciousness." Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol.1, 3rd ed. (New York: Appleton, 1897), 141.

Henry Maudsley, in his 1876 *The Physiology of Mind*, came to a similar conclusion: "May we not then justly say that self-consciousness is utterly incompetent to supply the facts which shall lay the foundations of a truly inductive psychology" (19). Maudsley, like his contemporaries, was careful not to dismiss introspection out of hand, but he stressed its limitations for a scientific study: "I have no absurd desire to repudiate introspective observation

to collapse the dualisms of mind and matter, feeling and motion, and subject and object. To do so, he insisted that science must assume an objective perspective and study matter, motion, and object in order to “know the subjective facts with accuracy and fullness.”¹³ He and his fellow physiological psychologists considered internal examination of one’s subjective states as too idiosyncratic, inaccessible, and limited for scientific knowledge, and they consequently spent little time focusing on introspective accounts of subjective states. Eliot regarded this lack of attention to subjectivity as a gap between psychology’s insights into the workings of the human mind and the complexity of individual thought and feeling, a gap that the novel might begin to close.

Under the heading “Feeling is a sort of knowledge,” one of Eliot’s notebooks records this observation: “What seems entirely wanted is a closer comparison between the knowledge which we call rational and the experience which we call emotional.”¹⁴ In *Daniel Deronda* she made this comparison the foundation of the novel’s formal mechanics. For Lewes, because objective matter and subjective mind were two sides of

entirely; I aspire only to see it dethroned from the exclusive place which it has usurped, and relegated to its proper place in the study of mental science” (61). He, like Lewes and Spencer, saw subjective introspection as a secondary corollary to objective observation: “The true method of psychology is the union of the subjective and objective methods, or rather the rigorous prosecution of the objective method interpreted by subjective light” (63). *The Physiology of Mind* (New York: Appleton, 1877).

¹³ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind*, 14.

¹⁴ Thomas Pinney, “More Leaves from George Eliot’s Notebook,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 29 (1966): 364. Eliot’s philosophical interest in the relationship between objective and subjective states was also related to her interest in August Comte’s work, particularly his *System of Positive Polity*. As Suzy Anger points out, Eliot’s notebooks relating to her reading of Comte’s *System* select passages “which show Comte’s attempt to combine objective and subjective methods” of human understanding: “What she found most compelling in Comte’s epistemology were his efforts to connect a theory of knowledge to a theory of morality and his efforts to reconcile subjective and objective ways of knowing.” Suzy Anger, “George Eliot and Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86.

the same coin, to make such a comparison would involve using the insights of “rational” science – a general understanding of how minds and bodies work – to account for emotional experience. For Spencer, subjective emotional experience offers the “data” and the “terms” upon which objective psychology can base its work.¹⁵ But for Eliot, the novel could combine observational knowledge and phenomenological experience by exploring not only their incommensurable differences, but also the ways in which they impinged upon one another. The novel could expose how any explanatory discourse that privileges methods of observational objectivity impacts and distorts the subjectivity it portrays as the personal experience of a general truth. And, finally, the novel offered Eliot a way of synthesizing objective and subjective phenomena by making objectivity a constitutive element of subjective phenomenology, or what we call self-consciousness.

Daniel Deronda consequently oscillates between narration in which the third and first persons merge and narration that separates them by means of free indirect discourse, narrative diagnosis, and direct reportage of characters’ thoughts. In a novel concerned with the determining influence of other minds, Eliot uses third-person narrative to demonstrate how the subjective experience of personhood had been changed by objective explanations of the mind. The first chapter of the novel demonstrates that characters do not have control over either their mental or their physiological experiences. That agency is located partly within a body, as evidenced by the coercion Daniel experiences to look at Gwendolen and by Gwendolen’s inability to control her physical or emotional reactions: “her eyes met Deronda’s, and instead of averting them as she would have desired to do, she was unpleasantly conscious that

¹⁵ Spencer, *Principles*, Vol. 1, 141.

they were arrested—how long?” (10). But these physical coercions and arrests are compelled not just from within; they are external influences attached to the “scrutiny” that both Daniel and Gwendolen experience from one another and from a supervising narrator. From the very first page’s reminder that narrative constructs characters rather than the other way around, Daniel’s and Gwendolen’s psychological and physiological experiences are characterized by the felt pressure of being made an object of knowledge. The novel will resolve the tensions it creates between objectivity and subjectivity by turning objectification into a mode of self-consciousness.

By synthesizing explanative objectivity with what might be called novelistic phenomenology, Eliot did for fiction what William James would do for psychology. She created a narrative theory of self-consciousness as a method of introspection that integrates subjective experience and objective knowledge as processes that can take place within a single mind. As we will see, James would transform associationist and physiological psychology by recuperating the discarded method of introspection not only as a valid source of psychological knowledge, but as the basis for a theory of just what it means to be a self constantly in the process of change. For James, consciousness of self meant a stream of thought constantly shifting, each present part of which is a thinking “I” that owns as objects of its thought previous mental and bodily states, the aggregate of which it calls “me.” In *Daniel Deronda* Eliot transforms Daniel and Gwendolen, in contrasting but complementary ways, by creating in them both a model of self-consciousness that converts the pressure of objectification into a new type of processual self-consciousness.

II. Narrative Knowledge

More than any of Eliot's previous novels, *Daniel Deronda* flaunts its third-person narrative mechanics, associating the power to tell stories about human behavior with a top-down diagnostic power over its characters. While it requires minimal interpretive work to see that Eliot associates narrative with objectivity and observation in this novel (these are, after all, common features of third-person narration), it is important to understand just how she accomplishes this task. Only then can we understand how Eliot incorporates into procedures of narrative objectivity its implicit critique and makes way for a synthesis of third-person philosophical/psychological explanation with the phenomenological narrative of subjective experience.¹⁶

The very form of *Daniel Deronda* offers our first indication of how Eliot draws attention to the primacy and authority of the narrative person and to the impact of discourse on story. This novel has been roundly criticized for stretching the limits of realism by means of romantic coincidence and manipulation of character and plot.¹⁷ Perhaps the clearest example of such formal transgression is the notorious division

¹⁶ For a different take on how Eliot critiques omniscience, see Rae Greiner's essay on sympathy. Greiner's focus is on *Middlemarch* and, most insightfully, *The Lifted Veil*, and her argument is a formal one. Sympathy, she argues "repeatedly founders in those characters most narrator-like in their omniscience" because, following Adam Smith, "[k]nowing what others think and feel turns out to be, as Smith had argued, the worst impediment to sympathy imaginable." Rae Greiner, "Sympathy Time: Adam Smith, George Eliot, and the Realist Novel," *Narrative* 17 no.3 (2009), 300; 305.

¹⁷ Shuttleworth, for instance, argues that Eliot "deliberately breaks the conventions of realism to include within the novel coincidences in plot that strain credibility, and individual visions that narrative events fulfill." *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*, 181. Linda Shires reads *Daniel Deronda* as a "major turn in the fortunes of realism" in the Victorian period. She argues that in this novel "Eliot's project... fundamentally calls realism into question." "[I]f realism as an aesthetic seeks to promote coherence," Shires argues, this novel "questions whether coherence is possible at all in a fragmented world." Linda Shires, "The Aesthetics of the Victorian Novel: Form, Subjectivity, Ideology," *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 72, 73.

between its country-house plot and its “Jewish” plot, a division that prompted F.R. Leavis to call for their separation and the excision of Daniel’s story.¹⁸ The novel’s fragmentation, formal splitting, temporal shifts, varied tempo, and shifting vantage points all draw attention to the authority of discourse over story and contribute to what Alex Woloch calls the “the self-enclosed grip of the narrative structure.”¹⁹ In this novel a bold and manipulative narrative shapes consciousness.

The second indication of Eliot’s association between third-person narrative and manipulative objective observation is through the novel’s oscillations between character experience and narrative commentary. As if to flaunt her diagnostic prowess, the narrator frequently shifts from a presentation of characters’ actions, thoughts, and feelings to an interpretation of those specific actions, thoughts, and feelings, and from there to generalizations about human behavior that provide an explanatory framework for both presentation and interpretation. Interpreting Gwendolen’s happiness at the Archery Meeting, for instance, the narrator confides:

No wonder she enjoyed her existence on that July day. Pre-eminence is sweet to those who love it, even under mediocre circumstances: perhaps it is not quite mythical that a slave has been proud to be bought first; and probably a barn-door fowl on sale, though he may not have understood himself to be called the best of a bad lot, may have a self-informed consciousness of his relative importance, and strut consoled. But for complete enjoyment the outward and the inward must concur. And that concurrence was happening to Gwendolen. (100)

¹⁸ “As things are, there is, lost under that damning title, an actual great novel to be extricated. And to extricate it for publication as *Gwendolen Harleth* seems to me the most likely way of getting recognition for it. *Gwendolen Harleth* would have some rough edges, but it would be a self-sufficient and very substantial whole” F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (New York: Stewart, 1948), 122.

¹⁹ Alex Woloch, “*Daniel Deronda*: Late Form, or After *Middlemarch*,” *A Companion to George Eliot*, 176.

Zooming out from Gwendolen's present experience, the narrator formulates a law of nature that applies to behavior in general, in the light of which we are meant to understand Gwendolen's joy. We next receive two analogies to Gwendolen's feelings that illustrate this same law of human nature. That her feelings observe the same principle as those of a slave and a barn-yard fowl reduce her subjective experience in the reader's eye and cast ridicule on Gwendolen's self-estimation before returning to Gwendolen's present moment. Such oscillations between character consciousness and narrative consciousness apply equally to the portions of the novel focusing on Daniel. Chapter 16, for example, introduces us to Daniel's childhood with similar oscillations between his own experience and the general laws it illustrates.

At times Eliot's narrative diagnosis appears to abandon present experience entirely in favor of narrative commentary on the mental constitution of a character. In such cases, only occasional interjections indicate a characters' self-assessment. Chapter 4 begins with this consideration of Gwendolen's attitude towards marriage:

But her thoughts never dwelt on marriage as the fulfillment of her ambition; the dramas in which she imagined herself a heroine were not wrought up to that close. To be very much sued or hopelessly sighed for as a bride was indeed an indispensable and agreeable guarantee of womanly power; but to become a wife and wear all the domestic fetters of that condition, was on the whole a vexatious necessity. (39)

In this passage – as throughout the novel – the boundary between narrator and character is almost imperceptible. To convey Gwendolen's thoughts, the narrative borders on free indirect style, but the description of Gwendolen's interiority is contained by a diagnostic frame that expresses both the contents and the *limits* of her mental life ("her thoughts never dwelt... were not wrought up to that close"). As the chapter progresses, the diagnosis grows bolder:

Always she was the princess in exile... How was this to be accounted for? The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface: -- in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones, so that if she came into the room on a rainy day when everybody else was flaccid... there seemed to be a sudden, sufficient reason for keeping up the forms of life. This potent charm... may seem so full a reason for Gwendolen's domestic empire, that to look for any other would be to ask the reason of daylight when the sun is shining. But beware of arriving at conclusions without comparison. I remember having seen the same assiduous, apologetic attention awarded to persons who were not at all beautiful or unusual... Hence I am forced to doubt whether even without her potent charm and peculiar filial position Gwendolen might not still have played the queen in exile. (41)

I quote this passage at length to demonstrate the third effect of narrative objectivity: a separation of narrator from character that emphasizes the narrator's wide experience, expertise, diagnostic vision, and detached observation. Gwendolen is a puzzle for narrator and reader to decipher. Thus it is the narrator's role to anticipate our conclusions much as a psychologist would explain the reactions of the subjects in an experiment, warning us not to draw conclusions on the basis of a single specimen. The narrator asserts her expertise. Here and throughout the novel, she establishes herself as the authoritative "I" by naming the second-person reader and the third-person character and diagnosing both.

Finally, Eliot's use of epigraphs stages the association between novelistic narration and objective authority by drawing a parallel between the novelist's narration of human experience and the scientist's explanation of planetary movements. Picking up the thread of her opening epigraph, Eliot begins chapter 16 with the following epigraph:

Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history. The astronomer threads the darkness with strict deduction, accounting so for every visible arc in the wanderer's orbit; and the narrator of human actions, if he did his work with the same completeness, would have to thread the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action, and to those moments of intense suffering which

take the quality of action - like the cry of Prometheus, whose chained anguish seems a greater energy than the sea and sky he evokes and the deity he defies. (164)

Both astronomer and novelist are here tasked with providing an explanatory account and accurate knowledge. According to this comparison, the “narrator of human actions” should offer a complete account of “the hidden pathways of feeling and thought” in characters; should, that is, make human consciousness “visible,” “legible,” and explain its cause and effect. That Eliot places this simile inside an epigraph is significant, given that an epigraph is usually one author’s means of ventriloquizing another. Epigraphs should add another layer of authority to the narrative, one that locates that authority elsewhere, in an external perspective or established truth. But Eliot sets up this simile so that it separates her narrative method from the inappropriate method she attributes to the scientist. It is here that we can begin to trace Eliot’s critique of detached narrative procedures.

Eliot links third-person narration with scientific objectivity precisely in order to demonstrate the limitations and even the dangers of such diagnostic perspective where human consciousness is concerned. By comparing men to planets, this epigraph suggests that both have “hidden pathways” that expert observation can make visible to others. But the grammatical construction of the simile makes the logic of the comparison purely hypothetical. The conditional “if... would have to” indicates that the “narrator of human actions” will *not* carry out the same “strict deduction” and complete “accounting” as the astronomer. Prometheus’s cry might “take the quality of action,” but that action does not follow a pattern as tangible as the path of a planet’s movement. Prometheus’s appearance in this epigraph indeed provides a metonymic link between human behavior and a mythical version of the heavens very different from the

astronomer's. Thus, if the astronomer's effort to map the universe stretches the limits of possibility, then a novelistic attempt to map human consciousness must go as far beyond those limits as one would in mapping the emotions of a mythical hero whose fatal error, we remember, was to strive for complete knowledge. Why does Eliot suggest that it would be an act of impious futility for a novel to try to map human consciousness with the accuracy of a scientist?

Given what we have seen of the novel's tendency to universalize human behavior, this is a perplexing question. An answer begins to take shape when we recognize that Eliot sets up objective observation to vie with phenomenological experience not only within her characters but also as the psychological framework for the novel. The novel's epigraphs and narrative commentary consequently acknowledge the difficulty of a narrative form that conventionally performs a psychological reading of its characters as it presents their subjective experience. "How trace the why and wherefore in a mind reduced to the barrenness of a fastidious egoism..." asks the narrator in the epigraph to chapter 25 (278). Half-mockery, half-lamentation for the project of narrative omniscience, this question that receives no answer reveals the weight of the task of tracing and interpreting a mind that cannot be reduced to a *why* or *wherefore*. It is important that the epigraphs I have quoted are among those most likely to have been written by Eliot herself and so should be considered elements of her third-person narrative. So constituted, they draw even more attention to the artificiality of the separation of narrative authority from character psychology. In such epigraphs Eliot might even be mocking her own use of an authoritative omniscience that deploys universals with respect to human consciousness.

That Eliot tends to make observations about the task of narration by way of comparisons to science indicates her awareness of just how the novel form had been shaped by its various responses to developments in the science of psychology. Such comparisons pit explanation (associated with science) against novelistic narration. Eliot saw the novel's focus on individual minds as a more challenging, but also more worthy, task than discovering general laws of behavior, whether those laws belonged to moral philosophy or physiological psychology. The chapter that finds Gwendolen unable to make up her mind about marriage begins with an epigraph from La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*: "Il set plus aisé de connoître l'homme en général que de connoître un homme en particulier" [It is easier to know man in general than to know one man in particular] (309). Knowing man in general turns out to be a simple task relative to explaining the behaviors of any one person.

Why this is the case becomes clear if we attend to the narrator's asides about narrative salted freely throughout the novel. A passage cast in free indirect discourse to depict Lush's frustration at his inability to predict his master's next action fuses the vicissitudes of the narrator's consciousness with Lush's thought process and reveals a similar frustration at the difficult task of explaining subjectivity: "Of what use... is a general certainty that an insect will not walk with his head hindmost, when what you need to know is the play of inward stimulus that sends him hither and thither in a network of possible paths?" (282). This passage bears comparison to Lewes's scientific attempts to understand how nervous networks work in small creatures. But Eliot's comment stands out for its use of the term "play," which emphasizes unpredictable movement. Where Lewes would have sought predictable patterns (the "general certainty"), Eliot embraces the "play" of human feeling, emotion, and action, and this

creative playfulness is not amenable to certain knowledge. As her narrator puts it, “Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being?” (111). Phenomenology disrupts epistemology. An individual mind has that “play of inward stimulus that sends him hither and thither in a network of possible paths”; a person has “innumerable impressions under differing circumstances” (111). By insisting on this form of human consciousness, Eliot challenges a type of narration that aims at scientific objectivity at the cost of undervaluing “the play of inward stimulus” on the conscious mind and impulsive action. Read in this light, Eliot’s version of human consciousness looks remarkably like the one William James would propose twelve years later.

III. Consciousness of Self

In his monumental 1890 text *The Principles of Psychology*, James developed a theory of human self-consciousness that divided the person into two components, the person as knowing subject and the person as object of knowledge, each of which operates strictly in relation to the other. The “I” is the knowing self, which understands itself as distinct and as constituting a continuous personal identity by “owning” the thoughts that have come before the present version of the I. The “Me” is the known self, or what James refers to as the “Empirical Self.”²⁰ Me is an object of knowledge to the thinking I; it includes all that can be owned as belonging to the self emotionally. In other words, the empirical self is many selves; the parts of the self spread out to include various parts of the body, mind, possessions, family members, friends, and reputation. At the end of his chapter on the nature of self-consciousness, James sums up his

²⁰ James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1950), 1.291.

argument as follows: “personality implies the incessant presence of two elements, an objective person, known by a passing subjective Thought and recognized as continuing in time. Hereafter let us use the words ME and I for the empiricist person and the judging Thought” (emphasis original).²¹

In effect, James made the scientific objectivity of Victorian psychology into a function of individual, subjective consciousness. To perform this transformation of the objective perspective into a subjective one without sacrificing its objectivity, he draws on the method of introspection disdained by Victorian physiological psychologists:

*“Introspective Observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always... I regard this belief as the most fundamental of all the postulates of Psychology, and shall discard all curious inquiries about its certainty as too metaphysical for the scope of this book.”*²²

James redefines the consciousness of self as a complex combination of different forms of awareness that work together, thereby turning what is in fact a collection of selves into a continuous stream of consciousness. The subjective I makes the Me its own object of knowledge:

To have a self that I can *care for*, nature must first present me with some *object* interesting enough to make me instinctively wish to appropriate it for its *own* sake... These objects our consciousness treats as the primordial constituents of its Me... *The words ME, then, and SELF, so far as they arouse feeling and connote emotional worth, are OBJECTIVE designations, meaning ALL THE THINGS which have the power to produce in a stream of consciousness excitement of a certain peculiar sort.* (emphasis original)²³

James asks us to imagine the I as a series of “pulse[s] of cognitive consciousness,” each one of which “dies away and is replaced by another,” and each of which “knows its own

²¹ Ibid., 1.371.

²² Ibid., 1.185.

²³ Ibid., 1.319

predecessor, and finding it 'warm,' ... greets it, saying "Thou art *mine*, and part of the same self with me."²⁴ James's language is characteristic for its personification of the different parts of the self, which here talk to one another. By writing about successive stages and different parts of the self as if they were in conversation with one another about their own consistency, James preserves the heterogeneity of the person while also maintaining the coherence of a single self.

Despite James's articulation of the division between I and Me, his theory is far from dualistic or dialectical. The I and the Me are constantly in the process of forming and reforming as each Thought is replaced by another. The "stream of selves" which make up James's notion of personal identity includes both different manifestations of the self responding to an environment *and* a series of short-lived manifestations of the thinking I, which pass out of each present moment.²⁵ James's self is an entire and continuous "stream of selves," but at any one time the self with which we are immediately acquainted is only one momentary part of that stream. We identify ourselves with this "*active* element in all consciousness."²⁶ This active element is the knowing subject that makes all other elements of the self its object: "the Thought never is an object in its own hands, it never appropriates or disowns itself. It appropriates *to* itself, it is the actual focus of accretion, the hook from which the chain of past selves dangles, planted firmly in the Present."²⁷ Consciousness moves by repeatedly dropping the hook and taking up a new active element: "Anon the hook itself will drop into the past with all it carries, and then be treated as an object and appropriated by a new

²⁴ Ibid., 1.339.

²⁵ Ibid., 1.335.

²⁶ Ibid., 1.298.

²⁷ Ibid., 340-41.

Thought in the new present which will serve as a living hook in turn.”²⁸ In James’s formulation a self is constantly reforming the internalized relationship between a subject and an object, between a knowing self and a known self.

The hook serves as a useful metaphor for James because it describes the method by which consciousness holds itself together and keeps itself from dispersing into heterogeneous parts. It describes a fleeting and successive ownership. James’s version of the self builds upon but differs significantly from John Locke’s rationally organized person. Both Locke and James link personal identity to the preservation of memory, and James’s operation of introspection builds upon Locke’s notion of reflection, or “that notice which the Mind takes of its own Operations.”²⁹ For Locke, however, the present self automatically appropriates the past, whereas for James the process is much more complicated; the current section of the stream is always in the process of change and selectively “owns” parts of the past.³⁰ Ownership becomes a means for James to distinguish his notion of the self from that of associationism. James treats both empiricism and associationism, which he traces from Locke and Hume to James Mill and John Stuart Mill, as starting points for his psychology. But he argues that “these writers

²⁸ Ibid., 341.

²⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. 1690, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979), 105.

³⁰ James, in fact, critiques the Lockean school for its overly “convenient” approach which tends “to formulate the mental facts in an atomistic sort of way, and to treat the higher states of consciousness as if they were all built out of unchanging simple ideas” (236). For James, this organized theory of the mental arena cannot hold because “no two ‘ideas’ are ever exactly the same” (235). We are constantly in the process of change.

Gillian Einstein and Owen Flanagan offer a succinct overview of the differences between Locke and James: “James’s account is developmental in a way Locke’s is not, and although James gives a robust account of mature adult narratives, he ties the capacity to tell the story of one’s life to basic features of the conscious stream, features shared by other animals. Whereas Locke writes after Descartes, James writes after Darwin, and it shows.” Einstein and Flanagan, “Sexual Identities and Narratives of Self.” *Narrative and Consciousness: Literature, Psychology, and the Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 211.

have neglected certain more subtle aspects of the Unity of Consciousness" (336). James disagrees with the idea that this unity is produced by the mere association of mental elements; he argues that consciousness must be held together by something over and above these elements to produce what he would later refer to as "unity in manyness."³¹ He finds this medium for sticking together the stream of selves not in a superadded soul but in what he refers to as a "common-sense" notion: "that appearance of never-lapsing ownership."³²

James supplements this ownership or appropriation by the influence this active element of consciousness exerts over the various selves that make up the stream:

There is a spiritual something in him which seems to *go out* to meet [the other] qualities and contents, whilst they seem to *come in* to be received by it. It is what welcomes or rejects. It presides over the perception of sensations, and by giving or withholding its assent it influences the movements they tend to arouse. It is the home of interest... It is the source of effort and attention... Being more incessantly there than any other single element of the mental life, the other elements end by seeming to accrete round it and to belong to it.³³

Coming towards and going out to receive, influencing and arousing, giving or withholding, accreting and belonging – the language James uses to describe the phenomenon that holds together the stream of selves is affective. Elsewhere he describes the "animal warmth" by which the I gathers together its various preceding selves.³⁴

James's theory of personal identity combines possessive ownership with affective intimacy and makes both of these facets of a subjectivity that can make an object of the

³¹ William James, "The Knowing of Things Together," 1895, *Essays in Philosophy*, (Boston: Harvard College, 1978), 78.

³² James, *Principles*, 1.339.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1.298.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.334

previous versions of its self. This is how, in James's hands, the Victorian methodological bias for objectivity becomes a constitutive element of subjective experience.

Eliot's fiction arguably paved the way for this move in the field of psychology when it represented self-consciousness as a series of confrontations between a knowing and a known self. In what follows, I show how *Daniel Deronda* anticipates in subtly different and distinctively fictional ways James's modification of Victorian psychology. First, by using third-person narrative to demonstrate the potential impact on subjective experience of a detached, objective knowledge, she critiques the implications of both Victorian psychology and omniscient narrative form for an understanding of human subjectivity. Eliot sets up this opposition between subjective phenomenological consciousness and an objectively known self in order to collapse this opposition and demonstrate how self-consciousness depends not only on having an experiential self, but also on an internal faculty capable of objectifying that self. Eliot, like James, will find a way to assimilate observation and objectivity into individual experience, making it a constituent feature of self-consciousness. Second, in order to offer this theory of self-consciousness *Daniel Deronda* sets up the parallel trajectories of its two protagonists and demonstrates two very different responses to the experience of being an individual defined as such from an external perspective. Daniel and Gwendolen's stories converge and diverge to offer two very different, but parallel, narratives of how subjectivity is shaped and reshaped out of a relationship between self and at times overdetermining external milieu. Eliot uses the form of the novel – the oppositions between its two protagonists – to create a form of individual self-consciousness that must recognize, incorporate, and respond to the always-changing horizons of a world beyond the self.

Daniel Deronda's two protagonists initially experience objectivity as a function positioned beyond the self, in a narrator's detached authority. Eliot's third-person narrative slips so unobtrusively between reporting character's thoughts, diagnosing those thoughts and actions, and offering generalizations of human behavior, that the consciousnesses of the characters in question appear to be delimited by the narrator's perspective. Take, for instance, this description of Daniel's search for Mirah's brother:

He really did not long to find anybody in particular; and when, as his habit was, he looked at the name over a shop-door, he was well content that it was not Ezra Cohen. I confess, he particularly desired that Ezra Cohen should not keep a shop. Wishes are held to be ominous; according to which belief the order of the world is so arranged that if you have an impious objection to a squint, your offspring is the more likely to be born with one... Who is absolutely neutral? Deronda happening one morning to turn into a little side street out of the noise and obstructions of Holborn, felt the scale dip on the desponding side. (382).

Beginning with Daniel's feeling, the narrator quickly preempts Daniel's actions by a diagnosis of his habitual behaviors, indicating her knowledge of his mind. Daniel's hope that Mirah's brother does not keep a shop is presented to the reader not merely as Daniel's "desire," but as the narrator's "confession," a move that carefully contains Daniel's consciousness within the narrator's power to convey that consciousness. This narrative authority is augmented by the next sentence, which steps away from Daniel's experience in order to place his thoughts in the context of human behavior in general (the nature of wishes) and of a theory of determinism that might fitly describe the narrative mechanics of a novel often criticized for pushing realism beyond its limits with its fortuitous discoveries of kinship and its narrative coincidences. Finally, we return to Daniel, whose experience has been framed by the laws of general human behavior and the mechanisms of fate, and whose feeling upon discovering Ezra Cohen's shop is

described as if it were influenced by and responsive to the very narrative commentary that precedes it: he “felt the scale dip on the desponding side.”

Eliot’s narrator frames both of her protagonists’ experiences of consciousness with such narrative diagnosis and generalization, but for the majority of the novel the effects of this narrative scrutiny on each character are quite different. Daniel is here aligned with the narrator as if he shares her detached position. He is a “yearning disembodied spirit” whose “plenteous, flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy” (365; 364). Like the narrator, he watches others and analyzes their actions, for instance as he observes the inhabitants of Frankfort’s Juden-gasse: “what his eyes chiefly dwelt on now were the human types there; and his thought [was] busily connecting them with the past phases of their race” (363). Where Daniel is aligned with the narrator’s detachment and generalizing objectivity, Gwendolen, who wants to “feel herself exceptional,” suffers as the subject of narrative discourse that muses: “Perhaps it would have been rash to say then that she was at all exceptional inwardly, or that the unusual in her was more than her rare grace of movement and bearing, and a certain daring which gave piquancy to a very common egoistic ambition, such as exists under many clumsy exteriors and is taken no notice of” (53). Those characteristic instances when the narrator shifts between narrative modes, from free indirect discourse to narrative commentary and generalization, tend in Gwendolen’s case to stress the narrowness of her consciousness and her lack of control over situations. Take, for instance, the scene in which she wishes to catch Daniel’s attention:

And now he would not look round and find out that she was there! The paper crackled in his hand, his head rose and sank, exploring those stupid columns, and he was evidently stroking his beard, as if this world

were a very easy affair to her. Of course all the rest of the company would soon be down, and the opportunity of her saying something to efface her flippancy of the evening before, would be quite gone. She felt sick with irritation – so fast do young creatures like her absorb misery through invisible suckers of their own fancies – and her face had gathered that peculiar expression which comes with a mortification to which tears are forbidden. (415)

In a paragraph dominated by free indirect discourse conveying Gwendolen's self-absorbed frustration, the narrator inserts a short clause of narrative generalization – set off with em-dashes – that makes Gwendolen's physical display of "mortification" appear to be a reaction not just to her inability to attract Daniel's attention but also to her objectification as a particular type of "young creature" with predictable "fancies."

James's model of an internally divided consciousness in which self imagines and responds to world can help to explain the stark difference between Daniel and Gwendolen. James describes the formation of the self as one that begins with a "great splitting of the whole universe into two halves... we call the two halves by the same names... 'me' and 'not-me'... No mind can take the same interest in his neighbor's *me* as in his own. The neighbor's *me* falls together with all the rest of the things in one foreign mass, against which his own *me* stands out in startling relief."³⁵ This dynamic and shifting division must be performed anew each time the self reaches out into the world. The relationship between the "me" and the "not-me" is, for James, always changing, because "our sensibility is altering all the time, so that the same object cannot easily give us the same sensation over again."³⁶ This constant change is due to two things. First, the brain is constantly altering: "whilst we think, our brain changes, and... like the aurora

³⁵ James, *Principles*, 1.289.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.232.

borealis, its whole internal equilibrium shifts with every pulse of change.”³⁷ Second, there is the “influence of outward objects on the sense-organs” and the “susceptibility” of our bodies to those sensations: “Experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date.”³⁸ In other words, the “not me” repeatedly impacts and reshapes the “me”; James likens the changes in brain and consciousness that respond to the outside world to “the gyrations of a kaleidoscope.”³⁹ The world is “an undistinguishable, swarming *continuum*” out of which “our senses make for us, by attending to this motion and ignoring that, a world full of contrasts, of sharp accents, of abrupt changes, of picturesque light and shade.”⁴⁰

James is perhaps most famous for his argument, advanced in an earlier essay in *Mind* (1885), that we do not run from a bear because we feel fear; we see the bear, run, and feel fear: “we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble... Without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth.”⁴¹ In other words, James argues that the ways in which we react to the world – “[s]urprise, curiosity, rapture, fear, anger, lust, greed” – are the names of mental states we give to the bodily disturbances caused by our engagement with a world.⁴² James’s theory of emotion is significant for its illustration of just how consciousness is shaped and reshaped by the relationship between organism and milieu: “[T]he nervous system of

³⁷ Ibid., 1.234.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 1.235.

⁴⁰ Ibid., “284-85.

⁴¹ William James, “What is An Emotion?” *Mind: A Quarterly Journal of Psychology and Philosophy* 9 no. 34 (1884): 190.

⁴² Ibid., 189.

every living thing," he argues, "is but a bundle of predispositions to react in particular ways upon the contact of particular features of the environment... Our whole cubic capacity is sensibly alive."⁴³ When he elaborates on this theory in his second volume of *The Principles of Psychology*, James argues that "*the entire organism may be called a sounding-board, which every change of consciousness, however slight, may make reverberate.*"⁴⁴

At the beginning of *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen imagines the "not-me" beyond herself as a static backdrop, like James's "foreign mass," against which she can project her stable self. The narrator, merging with Gwendolen's own thoughts about her life, describes Offendene as "a good background" for Gwendolen precisely because it is small and self-contained and can showcase her small life (54). But when Gwendolen draws a line between herself and the world, she becomes "a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel" (53). In Gwendolen, Eliot creates a self who understands the world beyond her person and her interactions with that world as "fuel" for her own narrow self; her "me" creates a corresponding "not-me" in order to exclude it and draw from it what is necessary to her egocentric self-consciousness. By contrast, in *Daniel* Eliot creates a self who wishes to make the word outside himself all-encompassing and his "me" merely a part of the "not-me" beyond him. Early in the novel we discover that it is Daniel's goal to "shift his center till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape" (189). We might say that Eliot creates in her antithetical constructions of character two different reactions against the notion James would later articulate – that a self is constituted and reconstituted by constant modifications to a milieu. Daniel, by attempting to abstract himself from

⁴³ Ibid., 190.

⁴⁴ James, *Principles*, 2.450.

immersion in the world, and Gwendolen, by attempting to shape that world as a framework for her own experience, emphasize for Eliot the struggle to attain self-consciousness – understanding of the self – when one is constantly impacted by a complex external world.

Early in the novel the narrator poses this opposition between narrow consciousness and expansive world in a characteristic aside:

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant? -- in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely;... a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unfelt, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy. (124)

The novel's answer to this question will be to show that the history of a single human consciousness is in fact inseparable from the "pulses" by which that person experiences him or her self as connected to a vast milieu. As Daniel's consciousness contracts and Gwendolen's expands, the novel forms a model of self-consciousness that assimilates the outside world and its possibilities of knowledge that exist beyond the self and makes them a part of the narrow and self-involved aspects of a person's interiority. Eliot uses the parallel but antithetical processes of expansion and contraction as the very form of the novel, a form that allows her to both anticipate James's notion of a self-consciousness that incorporates an objectifying and external perspective and to critique James's comparatively uncomplicated notion of how a person can be a self-conscious self and, at the same time, a "sounding-board" always changed and impacted by the world.

IV. Gwendolen's "Subjection to a Possible Self"

The beginning of Gwendolen Harleth's story experiments with what it would mean (to use Eliot's own terms from her journal) for "the knowledge which we call rational" and "the experience which we call emotional" to correspond to one another. Is it possible, as Lewes and other psychologists would hold, for objective knowledge about the person and subjective experience of being a person to be one and the same thing? Gwendolen's story voices a definitive no. Prior to meeting Daniel – as we discover when the narrative returns to the past from its Leubronn beginnings – Gwendolen positions herself as the object of other people's knowledge by carefully posing herself in a series of "imagined scenes" in which she is a stable and aesthetic object at the center of a static and small-scale background (145). She attempts to maintain correspondence between subjective and objective perspectives of self. Framed mirrors, portraits, tableaux, landscapes, and rooms – these recurring images all construct Gwendolen not just as the object of other people's gazes, but as the onlooker of her own performance of herself for others. For instance, in an oft-repeated scene, Gwendolen goes "to the tall mirror between the windows, which reflected herself and the room completely, while her mamma sat down and also looked at the reflection" (28).

With such images of portraits and mirrors, Eliot references a type of fiction that, by appropriating a rigid scientific view of the self as a stable object of knowledge, would cast character as a static representable entity. Gwendolen is "a girl who had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass," a parallel construction that equates Gwendolen's consciousness of self with others' view of her, but that makes all views into the function of Gwendolen's own single-focused gaze (18). If knowledge of the person and experience of being a person

were to mirror one another, the novel suggests, they could not escape the narrow and self-referential frame of a mirror. Appropriating psychology's observational objectification of a conscious being and making it a feature of Gwendolen's individual consciousness, Eliot illustrates how parallelism between knowing person and known person cannot offer a sustained model of self-consciousness without rendering a person static and unchangeable. Gwendolen is only able to cast herself as a series of still images within limited static backgrounds; she must resist movements over which she has no control: "She never acted – only made a figure in *tableaux vivans* at school" (54).

Although the novel will produce an alternative form of self-consciousness predicated upon a way of reconciling known self and knowing self, it begins by demonstrating that Gwendolen's attempts at self-objectification are unsuitable because the knowing self simply mirrors the known self *mise en abyme*. Such an I-Me relationship is incapable of development. Gwendolen's attraction to stable images betrays the fact that any movement or change to the self-as-object threatens to undermine the self-knowledge she equates with identity itself. Eliot and James agree that, on the contrary, when we consider the nature of the self "we are dealing with fluctuating material."⁴⁵ Eliot drives home this point by developing in Gwendolen an alternative method of self-knowledge. To do so, she first devises two ways of collapsing Gwendolen's knowing and known self: by splitting her view of herself into multiple internalized and externalized elements, and by externalizing her self-perception through Daniel's scrutinizing gaze.

⁴⁵ James, *Principles*, 1.291.

First, Eliot begins to take apart Gwendolen's single portrait of herself and split her into multiple parts. Used to viewing herself as a picture, Gwendolen watches herself react in unpredictable ways that defy that picture and fill her with "astonishment and terror" (136). Various selves appear in defiance of her understanding of herself as a self-contained, self-controlling object. Feeling the unwilled motion of embodied mind, Gwendolen finds herself "under subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about" (136). Sensation fiction and earlier Victorian psychology would explain Gwendolen's terrified scream at the painting revealed behind the moveable panel during her "tableau of Hermione" as an automatic response that evades cognitive control (60). The scene in question makes Gwendolen an object of observation and a spectacle: "Every one was startled, but all eyes in the act of turning towards the opened panel were recalled by a piercing cry from Gwendolen, who stood without change of attitude, but with a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered" (61). Reflecting on the scene after-the-fact, the narrator explains that Gwendolen "wondered at herself in these occasional experiences, which seemed like a brief remembered madness, an unexplained exception from her normal life" (63). I find it significant that Gwendolen lacks any self-aware understanding of just what has occurred in her; her actions remain "unexplained." Much like the startled person whom James imagines running away from a bear, Gwendolen's physiological reaction is too fast for her to register fear. "Fear... enter[s]" into her consciousness as a correlate of that reaction.

Eliot, as we see, explains this scene as a much more complex problem than the mind's inability to control the actions of a body. To make this point, she invokes the familiar figure of horse and rider that we find in William Carpenter's and Frances Power

Cobbe's psychological work as an illustration of the relationship between mind and body.⁴⁶ This image first portrays Gwendolen's desire "to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side" (328), but it later describes her capitulation to a marriage in which she is "brought to kneel down like a horse under training for the arena" (320). Here, the switch in Gwendolen's position from the one who holds the reins to that of a horse trained for the chariot race obviously operates as a metaphor for her transformation from self-control to subjected body. But more is at stake in this imagery than what might be the coda of a sensation novel. Even before marriage to Grandcourt, Gwendolen begins "to be afraid of herself, and to find out a certain difficulty in doing as she liked" (138). Well before James argued that Victorian theories of embodied automatism offer overly simplistic explanations for the much more complex interaction between multiple selves, Eliot laid out the impossibility of Gwendolen's reconciling competing components of her "many-sided self" (586).⁴⁷ She is "frightened at myself" (452). Her own "thoughts insist like willful tormentors" (441). She feels as if she is "two creatures" (691). It is in the production of a model of self-consciousness as the interaction of multiple, but nonetheless mutually dependent, selves that Eliot most clearly prefigures James's psychology.

In Gwendolen, Eliot illustrates what happens to a "many-sided self" without that principle of "unity in manyness" James would articulate later in the century as a mechanism of ownership and self-objectification. James sees this as the thinking of a present I, which feels affective warmth for and thus gathers together the various selves,

⁴⁶ See chapter 3, page 199.

⁴⁷ Eliot expands on the same multiple nature of self in her characterization of Daniel's mother, who explains to him: "Often when I am at ease it all fades away; my whole self comes quite back; but I know it will sink away again, and the other will come - the poor, solitary, forsaken remains of self, that can resist nothing" (636).

much, as he puts it, as a cattle-herd identifies “all the beasts on which he finds his own particular brand,” the “herd-mark” being the “animal warmth” that “makes them into a whole.”⁴⁸ Without this central element of self-consciousness, Gwendolen acts as if she has what James terms a “secondary personage,” one that appears in abnormal states of the mind, including somnambulism, hypnotism, and hysteria. He explains these as a splitting up of the self: “the total possible consciousness may be split into parts which coexist but mutually ignore each other.”⁴⁹ James transforms the automatism, embodied will, and unconscious cerebration of earlier Victorian physiological psychology into a version of the self whose actions are not owned by a present thinking “I.”

Eliot thus anticipates James’s understanding of phenomenological consciousness as the breaking off of old aspects of the self that accompanies the process by which that self is compounded with new forms of awareness. She emphasizes this when, throughout the novel, she refers to “epochs” of consciousness that coincide both with the novel’s events and with new manifestations of consciousness within her protagonists. Thus we find Gwendolen’s thoughts about Deronda marking “a new epoch for Gwendolen” (335) and awakening “something like a new soul” (335). So, too, when Daniel enters her life and “awakens a new consciousness” (430), it is tantamount to “the awakening of a new life within her” (697). After one of their final meetings, Gwendolen feels “the beginning of a new existence” (769).

Daniel, too, undergoes epochal changes. After meeting Mirah, we read, “Daniel felt himself growing older this evening and entering on a new phase” (195) and his new-

⁴⁸ James, *Principles*, 1.334.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.207. James uses the same logic to conclude that a somnambulist or an epileptic should not be held responsible for his actions because he is “not the same person forensically now which he was then” (373).

found Jewishness produces “a new epoch in resolve” (725). But where, as we will see, Mirah and a Jewish heritage provide Daniel’s consciousness with something that lends coherence to his experience, Gwendolen struggles to maintain a continuous self under the pressure of these splittings of consciousness. Anticipating James in this respect, too, Eliot simultaneously illustrates and critiques associationist theories that describe the self, to adopt James’s summary, “as an aggregate of which each part, as to its *being*, is a separate fact.”⁵⁰ Gwendolen requires what James refers to as “the real, present onlooking, remembering, ‘judging thought’ or identifying ‘section’ of the stream. This is what collects, –‘owns’ some of the past facts which it surveys, and disowns the rest, – and so makes a unity that is actualized and anchored and does not merely float in the blue air of possibility.”⁵¹ While I do not regard *Daniel Deronda* as simply staging James’s “stream of selves” *avant la lettre*, I draw the comparison in order to suggest that the novel was far better suited than theory to experiment with the experience of oneself as multiple. Eliot justifies this claim by illustrating the need for serious attention to the necessary role of introspection in explaining the difficulty of maintaining a coherent self while operating as a person in the world. What she proposes experimentally in fiction James would later articulate as scientific theory.

By exploring Gwendolen’s initial lack of self-conscious ownership and her faulty attempts to attain self-knowledge through the aesthetic objectification of her body, Eliot experiments with Gwendolen’s experience of herself as a “many-sided self” that has not yet developed the mechanism of self-consciousness necessary to establish the relationship between I and Me. Unable to comprehend emergent forms of desire within

⁵⁰ James, *Principles*, 1.336.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1.338.

the limits of her fixed perceptual field, Gwendolen grants these elements of herself a quasi-independent agency that lies at once inside and beyond her. She consequently associates her fear of herself and her actions with the unpleasant sense of some mysterious power in the vast universe. Thus when Gwendolen dismisses her "susceptibility to terror" at the portrait behind the panel as "a brief remembered madness, an unexplained exception from her normal life," she dismisses the very domains of experience that would require her self-expansion. The narrator suggests that Gwendolen shrinks the perimeters of her conscious experience just where they begin to expand when she links Gwendolen's fear of herself to her fear of the vast unknown: "The little astronomy taught her at school used sometimes to set her imagination at work in a way that made her tremble"; she experiences "an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself" (63-64). Used to viewing the world outside herself as a backdrop and regarding "all existence as fuel" for self-substantiation, Gwendolen equates her own mysterious and unwilled actions with external forces in "that unmanageable world which was independent of her wishes" (251). Thus it is hardly surprising that upon witnessing Grandcourt's accidental drowning, Gwendolen fears that she has, unbidden by conscious thought, taken his life through a fearful combination of unregulated feelings within and mysterious forces outside her: "I only know that I saw my wish outside me" (696). By forging this link between her own actions and environmental forces, Gwendolen in fact takes the first step towards extending her consciousness beyond the confines of its domestic framework to the point from which she can achieve an externalized awareness of her experiential self. The novel uses the "other" protagonist, Daniel Deronda, to produce such a view.

V. Daniel "Transforming Influence" and Gwendolen's "New Consciousness"

In the novel's first chapter, as we have seen, Eliot introduces Daniel's scrutinizing gaze into Gwendolen's self-awareness as her experience of being known by someone else. This projection of knowledge onto someone else becomes the means to expand exponentially Gwendolen's self-consciousness. Gwendolen's initial encounter with Daniel consequently divides her subjective experience from her self-as-object, as Daniel's "measuring gaze" and "scrutiny" challenge her habit of controlling her own aesthetic objectification: "In Gwendolen's habits of mind it had been taken for granted that she knew what was admirable and that she herself was admired. The basis of her thinking had received a disagreeable concussion, and reeled a little" (11-12). The form of self-consciousness she has picked from her limited experience has been an acute consciousness of being looked at as "admirable." By contrast, Daniel's gaze appears to pierce and interpret her in a way that suggests her admirable exterior conceals an element of her self that does not appear in her own aestheticized self-objectification.

Indeed the narrator describes Daniel's experience of looking at Gwendolen in the language of analysis and understanding when he seeks "a key... by which to interpret her more clearly" (434). Gwendolen is struck in turn by the notion that he is "measuring her and looking down on her... that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order" (10). In this respect, we might say, Daniel is both judge and scientific observer; Gwendolen experiences "an uneasy sense that there was some standard in Deronda's mind which measured her into littleness" (418). And this juridical-scientific observational standard of the externalized knower is a role Daniel shares with narrator, author, and reader of the novel's first

pages, each of whom is implicated in the novel's opening questions and in the scrutiny of Gwendolen as an object of knowledge.

Eliot links Daniel's interpretive gaze to the narrator's supervisory role over Gwendolen's story, as if in reacting to Daniel's detached and interpreting judgment she also reacts to the narrator and to the presence of an external authority over human behavior. Gwendolen's consciousness of her self in relation to the world outside the self is formally framed by the narrator's diagnostic procedure. Oscillating almost imperceptibly between a narrator's access to and reportage on Gwendolen's thoughts, free indirect discourse, direct quotation of thoughts, and authoritative asides, Eliot's characteristic narrative style places Gwendolen's conscious experience within a framework provided by a narrator who, as philosopher of human consciousness, explains its fraught relation to human behavior. In the following passage, I have indicated the narrator's rapid and subtle shifts between these narrative modes with brackets:

[report:] This hidden helplessness gave fresh force to the hold Deronda had from the first taken on her mind, as one who had an unknown standard by which he judged her. [free indirect discourse:] Had he some way of looking at things which might be a new footing for her – an inward safeguard against possible events which she dreaded as stored-up retribution? [generalization:] It is one of the secrets in that change of mental poise which has been fitly named conversion, that to many among us neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches theirs with a peculiar influence, subduing them into receptiveness. [diagnosis:] It had been Gwendolen's habit to think of the persons around her as stale books, too familiar to be interesting. Deronda had lit up her attention with a sense of novelty: not by words only, but by imagined facts, his influence had entered into the current of that self-suspicion and self-blame which awakens a new consciousness. [quotation:] 'I wish he could know everything about me without my telling him,' was one of her thoughts." (430)

Gwendolen's thoughts are shaped by the narrator's knowledge, which claims to know her "habit" of thought and to understand her experience by reference to "many among us." Much like the scientist, Eliot's narrator makes assessments by drawing connections between the general and the particular. But the effect of the leap from particular to general differs importantly from the deployment of such logic by psychological science. The narrator's privileged access to the mind of her character works not to determine inductively general laws of human behavior, but to use such perceived laws – the "secrets... of mental poise" – as constraining pressures *upon* characters. Eliot's interest is in what might be called the deductive, normatizing, and constraining effect of general pronouncements on individual consciousness.

Thus, in the passage above, we are told that Gwendolen associates Daniel with "an unknown standard by which he judged her." When the narrator subsequently claims to know "one of the secrets" of mental life in "many of us," she displays the very standard of judgment Gwendolen attributes to Daniel. Through Daniel, that is, Gwendolen experiences the power of a gaze that understands her actions. But because Daniel personifies and humanizes the narrator's "unknown standard," Daniel provides Gwendolen with an alternative mirror that enables her to perform the very same methods of understanding herself. His "way of looking at things," we are told, "might be a new footing to her," a footing that could help Gwendolen escape the defensive limits of her self-enclosed sense of self. By employing Daniel as an incarnation of narrative omniscience and scientific epistemology for Gwendolen, Eliot creates the possibility for a type of fictional psychology in which first-person experience can assimilate the third-person perspective.

This integration of multiple selves offers an enticing, positive alternative to Gwendolen's earlier self-objectification. At least this is implied by the fact that Gwendolen's initial "superstitious dread" of the "coercion [Deronda] had exercised over her thought" quickly becomes "an uneasy longing to be judged by Deronda" (329; 331). His curious "power over her" induces Gwendolen to think beyond the limits of her narrow experience (673). He asks her to "try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires," a request she initially meets by imagining an intimate connection to Daniel as the means of escaping the system of self-objectification within which the novel has trapped her (446). But Eliot cuts off any possibility of uniting Daniel and Gwendolen in a marriage plot. Gwendolen cannot escape her limited experience by uniting with Daniel; she has to expand herself from within by incorporating his perspective. By ending the novel with the separation of Daniel and Gwendolen, Eliot avoids a marriage plot that would make self-fulfillment a function of romantic love, in which two people unite as one. Such a form of enclosed unity would violate the type of consciousness that *Daniel Deronda* creates instead by making the relationship between its protagonists generate changes in their respective psychological experiences of themselves.

Daniel's role in Gwendolen's story is that of "a new consciousness" (430); he goes from the privileged onlooker of her actions to being "part of her conscience" (415). As he does so, Gwendolen assimilates the point of view of the onlooker – the narrator, the reader, the psychologist, the scientist, the philosopher – and makes that perspective a faculty of her own self-consciousness. It is in strikingly similar terms that James later refers to the process by which the mind integrates objective observation into its consciousness of self: "A mind which has become conscious of its own cognitive

function, plays what we have called 'the psychologist' upon itself. It not only knows the things that appear before it; it knows that it knows them. This stage of reflective condition is, more or less explicitly, our habitual adult state of mind."⁵² In order to assume this mediating role of externalized consciousness for Gwendolen, Daniel has to assume a form that can hold together a proto-Jamesian self-consciousness. Eliot achieves this form when Gwendolen's affective response to Daniel manifests itself as a judgment she internalizes. A pattern of reflexive language emerges in Eliot's descriptions of Daniel's scrutinizing gaze and its impact on Gwendolen. She begins to subject herself to "self-suspicion and self-blame" (430); then, "his power over her had begun in the raising of a self-discontent which could be satisfied only by genuine change" (673); finally he facilitates a "self-disapproval which had been the wakening of a new life within her" (679).

As Gwendolen assimilates Daniel's scrutinizing gaze, she forms a "vision of her past wrong-doing," a process that the novel presents by means of contrasting allusions to Shakespeare plays (669). Early in the novel, the narrator illustrates Gwendolen's "play of various, nay, contradictory tendencies" with the reference: "Macbeth's rhetoric about the impossibility of being many opposite things in the same moment, referred to the clumsy necessities of action and not to the subtler possibilities of feeling" (42). The allusion helps the narrator establish Gwendolen's essential heterogeneity of self. By the end of the novel, the narrator selects a comparison between Gwendolen and Hamlet that illustrates how she has developed a form of self-consciousness that can indeed gather her heterogeneous parts into a coherent – though still heterogeneous – self: "Those who

⁵² James, *Principles*, 1.272-73.

have a self-knowledge prompting such self-accusation as Hamlet's, can understand this habitual feeling of rescue. And it was felt by Gwendolen as she lived through and through again the terrible history of her temptations" (795). Making use of "that outer conscience which was made for her by Deronda," Gwendolen, in the present moment, reflects back upon her actions and attains "self-knowledge," or what James would call the "present onlooking, remembering, 'judging thought'" that "makes a unity" we call a person out of fragmentary, multiple selves.⁵³ When the narrator explains that "she had learned to see all her acts through the impression they would make on Deronda," we come to understand that this projection of judgment onto another becomes a condition for the possibility of another form of person, not unlike that of Brontë's heroines (673). This form reconciles the unpredictability of multiple selves with a consciousness capable of transforming new manifestations of the self into objects of its own understanding. This allows Eliot to advance a theory specific to the novel of the relationship of knowing self and known self within a single subjectivity. She uses the novel, we might say, to transform psychology into a social and ethical phenomenon.

In a letter to the positivist Frederic Harrison, Eliot would attest that "the Social Factor in Psychology" is "the supremely interesting element in the thinking of our time."⁵⁴ She used her novels to emphasize, as the narrator of *Middlemarch* explains, that "there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside of it."⁵⁵ In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot combines ethics with egotism and creates something on the order of a theory of social psychology by creating Gwendolen's

⁵³ Ibid., 1.338.

⁵⁴ Letters 7:161.

⁵⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 2000), 688.

self-consciousness out of what she imagines to be the content of Daniel's mind. For, as the narrator points out, "what construction of another's mind is not strong wishing equal to?" (342). The novel proceeds to set up the parallel trajectories of Gwendolen and Daniel so that they explore not actual interactions between two individuals, but, as Adela Pinch has shown, "a relation constituted in and through their practices of thinking about each other" – or, more specifically, for Gwendolen, her construction of the "impression that he was very much interested in her" (336).⁵⁶ This means that much of what Gwendolen imagines to be Daniel's judgments of her are in fact projections of her own developing self-judgment; she "enlarge[s] the place she imagined [herself] to have in [Daniel's] mind" (586).

The scrutinizing questions that open the novel begin to take on a new valence when, in the final book, we read that the "mission of Daniel to Gwendolen had begun with *what she had felt to be* his judgment of her at the gaming-table" (763, my emphasis). Are the questions really Daniel's thoughts, or are they Gwendolen's? The narrator makes it clear that this idea of the self located in another's mind is no mere symptom of Gwendolen's egotism (although it may be that as well); it is a constitutive element of human self-consciousness: "Is it any wonder," the narrator muses,

that [Gwendolen] saw her own necessity reflected in [Daniel's] feeling? She was in that state of unconscious reliance and expectation which is a common experience with us when we are preoccupied with our own trouble or our own purposes. We diffuse our feeling over others, and count on their acting from our motives. (771)

⁵⁶ Adela Pinch, *Thinking about Other People in Nineteenth-Century British Writing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 145. Pinch argues persuasively that "what holds *Daniel Deronda* together in spite of the famous divisions and entropic forces pulling its matter apart is, weirdly, the fictitious action of Daniel and Gwendolen thinking about each other."

The narrator articulates what the novel demonstrates, namely, that “[n]o chemical process shows a more wonderful activity than the transforming influence of the thoughts we imagine to be going on in another” (35). Eliot constructs a version of ethics not primarily as a function of sympathy, but as a function of imagining the thoughts about the self taking place in another’s mind.⁵⁷ Daniel takes part in that half of the novel that Leavis disparagingly referred to as *Gwendolen Harleth* as an externalized psychological component of Gwendolen’s self-consciousness rather than as a person in his own right.

Gwendolen will finally come to know and own her multiple selves and their immersion in a vastly expanded milieu when Eliot removes Daniel from his role as her “outer conscience” and allows Gwendolen to assume this role for herself by separating out her “I” from her “Me” and observing that “Me” as selves embedded within an expanding world. When Daniel confesses that he is leaving for the East, Eliot narrates Gwendolen’s “crisis” as an expanding consciousness: “she was for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving” (804). The language Eliot employs here is telling: Gwendolen’s “own world” is transformed into an external “existence” that includes her self. And this existence is spreading rather than simply

⁵⁷ The dominant critical view of Eliot’s ethical vision is that it is based upon sympathy. See, for instance, Suzy Anger, “George Eliot and Philosophy,” 80. But, as Adela Pinch argues, we might see in *Daniel Deronda* “a way of approaching ethics different from those commonly ascribed to her, so often described as the doctrine of sympathy, and an imperative to see into the life of others.” Pinch bases this insight on her reading of how this novel “suggests that thinking about another person may be a social good even when it’s wrong.” Pinch, *Thinking About Other People*, 169. My emphasis is, rather, on the ethical dimensions of imagining the version of the self seen by the other and assimilating that perspective as a function of both self-consciousness and moral action.

moving forward in a linear temporal plot. Gwendolen thus imagines herself as a part of – but not the central element in – an always-changing world. Such a world ceases to frighten her because she can now view her fluid place within an always-changing landscape from an observational, but always moving, perspective. She has by this point reversed her internalization of Daniel's view; rather than a projection of his view of her, this understanding of her existence is strictly the product of her own self-reflection. In her final letter to him she marks their separation from one another as a termination of his thoughts about her (and, by association, her projection of those thoughts onto him): "Do not think of me... You must not grieve any more for me" (810). Casting their relationship into the past ("it shall be better with me because I have known you"), she separates herself from his measuring gaze.

Eliot juxtaposes Gwendolen's story of an expanding consciousness and moving horizon with Daniel's narrowing horizon, his "imaginative need of some far-reaching relation to make the horizon of his immediate, daily acts" (746). By juxtaposing the antithetical and parallel unfoldings of these two protagonists – expansion and contraction – Eliot makes the novel into a form that produces self-consciousness out of the complex relationship between the narrow and self-involved aspects of interiority and the vast expansiveness of an outside world.

VI. What Becomes of the "Bird's-Eye" Perspective

Where Gwendolen's self-consciousness initially emphasizes a static conception of *self*, Daniel's self is almost erased by a *consciousness* that looks outward towards others rather than inward towards himself, creating "a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at" (189). If Daniel has mastered

the art of making himself an object of knowledge among many other objects, he does not have the faculty to distinguish between what James would call the Me and the Not-Me. Daniel therefore begins the novel with a "solemn passivity" that makes him attentive to other people's consciousness more than to his own (188). His "many-sided sympathy... threaten[s] to hinder any persistent course of action" (364). This sympathy is so diffusive that it risks canceling itself out by its lack of partiality: "His plenteous, flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy" (364). Daniel's problem at the beginning of the novel is that he wields consciousness without any embodied self, however limited or aestheticized, to ground his reflections. When the narrator refers to Daniel as a "yearning disembodied spirit," she emphasizes the fact that he lacks the physiological basis for emotional response (365). If Gwendolen begins the novel all body, Daniel begins the novel all mind.

We have seen how Eliot uses Gwendolen's story to offer one critique of third-person narration. Narrative omniscience, representative of scientific, objective detachment, produces a felt presence in a character's consciousness, the feeling that one is an object of external knowledge. Gwendolen's response to this external scrutiny early in the novel is to pose herself as a static and self-contained object in an attempt to take control of her objectification. Eliot uses Daniel's story to offer another, quite different critique of third-person narration.

Daniel responds to the ways in which the narrator coopts his mental state in the novel's opening pages by emulating the narrator's detached perspective. Without any evident blood ties or responsibilities localizing his affections, he develops the "habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others," a habit that aligns his way of seeing

with the narrator's all-encompassing perspective (364). As if he is all consciousness, Daniel's experience is of a "meditative numbness... a reflectiveness that threatened to nullify all differences" (365). By aligning Daniel with the narrator, the novel implies that the perspective of third-person narrator neutralizes and incapacitates the self: "A too reflective and diffusive sympathy was in danger of paralyzing him" (364). Eliot uses Daniel's initial expansive consciousness to emphasize the novel's theory that one cannot inhabit a detached observational perspective and still be a person.

If Eliot uses Gwendolen's story to extricate subjectivity from the narrow confines of interiority and incorporate an external perspective into self-consciousness, she correspondingly uses Daniel's story to extricate objectivity from the disembodied realms of pure knowledge and reincorporate it as a facet of the self. Here, we should keep in mind James's claim that, without bodily affect, a person's experience is "purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth."⁵⁸ The novel anchors Daniel's detached consciousness by giving it a physiological and emotional basis in feeling. Upon meeting Mirah, Daniel embarks "on a new phase in finding a life to which his own had come" (195); he begins to experience a life that develops from and around a local attachment. This gradual change begins with Daniel's negative reaction to Mirah's characterization of him as a selfless Buddha-figure: "Even if it were true that I thought so much of others, it would not follow that I had no wants for myself" (466). To carve out a "myself," Daniel must recognize and strive to overcome his detached perspective: "he wanted to escape standing as a critic outside the activities of men, stiffened into the ridiculous attitude of self-assigned superiority" (469). In a characteristic scene

⁵⁸ James, "What is An Emotion," 190.

illustrating Daniel's reflective habit, he examines his own reaction to an early meeting with Mordecai and realizes that, "[i]f he had read of this incident as having happened centuries ago in Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, Cairo, to some man young as himself, dissatisfied with his neutral life... it would have appeared to him quite natural that the incident should have created a deep impression on that far-off man" (509). In himself, however, Daniel resists this localization of attachment to Mordecai in the fear that it might be a "mere contagion, without consent of reason" (509). Used to merging his own person within the other objects of his knowledge and viewing life as if he is outside its affective pulls on the self, Daniel initially contrasts body and "reason" and fears that his emotional reaction to Mordecai might be a dangerous bodily contamination.

But Eliot will use Mordecai, and in particular Daniel's discovery of racial identity he feels as a source of both kinship and personal identity, to offer Daniel a method localizing and grounding his consciousness via his body. Jewishness offers Daniel an alternative to detachment; it attaches him to his own (racialized) biology. Both Daniel's dead grandfather (voiced through a friend's memory) and Mordecai emphasize the ability of Jewish identity to anchor the self in an affective history. Daniel's grandfather, Daniel Charisi, "despised... indifference" (724). And Mordecai muses that a person who "has no hearty kindred and fellowship" with his race has no citizenship: "He is an alien in spirit, whatever he may be in form... he is not a man" (528). These uncanny descriptions of what the novel has shown to be Daniel's "many-sided sympathy" help to counterbalance Daniel's initial lack of "partisanship" and establish in its place a physiologically rooted consciousness of self (364).

Mordecai's role in Daniel's story is juxtaposed with that played by Gwendolen. Indeed Daniel begins to experience the "foreshadowing of some painful collision" between "the grasp of Mordecai's dying hands on him" and Gwendolen's "trustful effort to lean and find herself sustained" (564). The novel deals with this collision of demands on Daniel by turning Mordecai's claim into a personal, biological attachment, in opposition to which Gwendolen's claim is alienating to the point of impersonality. Accordingly, he dreads "the weight of this woman's soul flung upon his own with imploring dependence" and he finds that his interactions with her have "the unintentional effect of making his ready sympathy seem more personal and special than it really was" (689, 700). As the novel draws towards a close, Daniel recognizes the danger of responding to an "impulse" to "shelter [Gwendolen's] life for evermore from the dangers of loneliness" (765). The implication is that Gwendolen's presence in Daniel's life would mean her consciousness might well engulf his own and that her projection of his thoughts might begin to define him. After all, Daniel's alignment with the narrator threatens to conscript his personhood as pure perspective: "His eyes had a peculiarity which has drawn many men into trouble; they were of a dark yet mild intensity, which seemed to express a special interest in every one on whom he fixed them" (332). Fixed on Gwendolen, his gaze allows her to project his "special interest" and transform it into a function of self-consciousness, but in Daniel this act of looking threatens to make him all gaze, purely cognitive consciousness, without substance.

Mordecai offers an alternative determination for Daniel's identity, one that forms a self for Daniel out of his body's affective and biological connection to Mordecai and, through Mordecai (in lieu of his mother), to his Jewish heritage. Mordecai's claim on Daniel also allows him to develop his personal self-consciousness out of a preexisting

and communal racial self-consciousness: “the soul of a people, whereby they know themselves to be one” (526). This physiological connection gives consciousness an affective center that gathers the parts of himself together: “The strongest tendencies of his nature were rushing in one current” (746). Eliot reshapes Daniel’s self-consciousness by means of a narrative that reverses the process of expansion and self-objectification that shapes Gwendolen, but that similarly involves making oneself an object of knowledge. As Amanda Anderson points out, Daniel does not just uncover his Jewish identity; he “affirms the racial identity he discovers.”⁵⁹ His affirmation is voiced in a statement to his grandfather’s friend: “I shall call myself a Jew” (724). This declaration of self-definition marks the point at which Daniel both acknowledges a Jewish self-consciousness by rooting himself in a biological, racial, and religious history and makes his identity a process of naming himself as an object of his own understanding. He “exchang[es] that bird’s eye reasonableness which soars to avoid preference and loses all sense of quality” – the expansive objectivity of narrative omniscience – for a “duteous bond” and “for the generous reasonableness of drawing shoulder to shoulder with men of like inheritance” (744-45). This is how Daniel finds an anchor for his subjective experience, a self-understanding defined by the novel as the ability to become an “I”

⁵⁹ Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 133. Anderson’s reading of *Daniel Deronda* is limited to Daniel’s storyline. Anderson reads the novel as articulating a “complicated cosmopolitan ideal that promotes critical detachment not only as a means to self-fulfillment but also as the basis for an ever-expanding horizon of ethical and political engagement” (119). Anderson’s argument differs from mine in that she does not see Eliot’s emphasis upon “embeddedness – familial, communal, and cultural” as at odds with what she argues is the novel’s emphasis on a cultivation of critical detachment (137). The type of self-reflection that Eliot produces in both Daniel and Gwendolen by the end of the novel is, I am arguing, one that counteracts the forces of detachment that epitomize narrative omniscience and Daniel’s initial alignment with that detached narrative perspective. Eliot uses Daniel’s story to counterbalance the expansion of Gwendolen’s consciousness and demonstrate that the reflective capacities of self-consciousness must be localized, embedded, in an experiential self. The “I” that knows and reflects is always in the process of change, constantly remade out of experiential facets of a “me.”

who, in a speech act, can “call myself” by the markers of physiological kinship and identity.

VII. “A Set of Experiments in Life”

Literature and science, personified in the epigraph to the first chapter of *Daniel Deronda*, appear hand in hand: “on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his” (7). But, as we have seen, Eliot’s novel draws this comparison – aligning third-person narrator with scientist – in order to critique the capacity of such objective epistemology to account for the phenomenological experience of being a person in the world. We should remember, though, that this is not the first epigraph of the novel. Turn back a couple of pages, before Book 1 begins, and one discovers this epigraph:

Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul:
There, 'mid the throng of hurrying desires
That trample on the dead to seize their spoil,
Lurks vengeance, footless, irresistible
As exhalations laden with slow death,
And o'er the fairest troop of captured joys
Breathes pallid pestilence.

These lines of verse, apparently composed by Eliot herself, locate us not in the external perspective of narrator or scientist, the observer and recorder of human behavior, but rather in the subjective experience of being a person whose “own soul,” or self, contains elements that are potentially dangerous because they are unknown. The novel thus begins not just with an epigraph about the methodical decisions made by those who *know* from an observational distance, but also with the vulnerability of a person’s

subjective experience when knowledge about his or her consciousness lies not within, but outside, the self.

As we have seen, Eliot uses the form of the novel to illustrate the problems that arise within individual consciousness when the knowledge of personhood is located outside the experience of being a person. She also uses the form of the novel, with its protagonists' parallel but antithetical trajectories, to reintegrate knowledge about the (always-changing, heterogeneous) person into the experience of being a person. In this task Eliot both critiques Victorian scientific methodology and recuperates its mechanisms within her fictional experiment. That is, she shows us how scientific methodology has the unfortunate consequence of separating out knowledge from subjectivity, and she uses the form of her novel to demonstrate the dangers of making such an epistemological methodology the basis of narrative representation. Eliot's novel exposes the slipperiness and fault lines in third-person narrative in order to demonstrate the felt pressures of being an individual whose experience is shaped by being defined as such from an external point of view. But she is able to recuperate the potential of scientific observational knowledge by assimilating it into consciousness itself. She revitalizes and offers a positive potential for an epistemology of the person that can do justice to individual psychological, moral, physiological, ethical, and emotional experience. In this sense, Eliot's novel is a psychological experiment. With her imagined human characters, Eliot can test out multiple possible impacts on human consciousness of the experience of being known from an external perspective and experiment with how a person might form a self-consciousness that incorporates that perspective. And she can do so not in order to prove a hypothesis nor establish a theory, but, as Eliot herself put it, "to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of."

Both Eliot and James use individual introspection to critique and revise Victorian psychology and to reconcile the opposing mechanisms of knowledge and feeling. By recuperating introspection, however, neither writer turned back the clock to the introspective values of eighteenth-century Common Sense or Romantic philosophy, values that tended to reinforce a single, unified consciousness.⁶⁰ Instead, they found a potential for an individual to incorporate a reflective perspective by making parts of conscious experience the object of one's own knowledge while retaining the essential fluidity and heterogeneity of personhood that had been developed by Victorian psychology and the novel form. This had been an impassible stumbling block for earlier Victorian psychologists. Henry Maudsley, in 1876, had determined the limitations of introspection as a method for a scientific psychology on the basis of the *stasis* that would be required in order to know oneself: "In order to observe its own action, it is necessary that the mind pause from activity; and yet it is the train of activity that is to be observed."⁶¹ This was precisely the problem that James would solve when he argued that the "I" that makes an object of its "Me" is always in the process of changing; it is "a passing subjective Thought," forming and re-forming in each new present moment.⁶² Both of Eliot's protagonists are able to develop and practice self-knowledge without being rendered static; to become self-knowing individuals, they do not have to be

⁶⁰ We remember, for instance, eighteenth-century arguments for the immateriality and indivisibility of the soul that tended to rely upon the insights provided by introspection. Samuel Clarke debated Anthony Collins in 1707-08 to argue that "Every Man feels and knows by Experience what Consciousness is, better than any Man can explain it... And it is not at all necessary to define more particularly what *it is*; but abundantly sufficient that we know and agree what it is *not*, viz., that it is not a Multitude of distinct and separate Consciousnesses." See chapter 1, note 28. James, of course, would disagree. Samuel Clarke, *The Works of Samuel Clarke* (London: Knapton, 1738), 790.

⁶¹ Maudsley, *Physiology of Mind*, 17.

⁶² James, *Principles*, 371.

transformed into either detached or autonomous models of the liberal individual or inert, interpellated, self-contained subjects. On the contrary, at the conclusion of *Daniel Deronda*, both characters understand themselves as changing parts of a social and environmental milieu symbolized by the “horizon” that, for Daniel, is created by “some far-reaching relation” to his Jewish brethren and that, for Gwendolen, is “but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving” (746; 804). Eliot’s model of self-consciousness is one in which the self is formed and re-formed by his or her embeddedness within a vast world.

Unlike James’s psychological treatise, however, Eliot can use the novel as a formal testing ground for reincorporating observational introspection into self-consciousness. It is in the wake of Eliot’s novel form that James could build upon the work Victorian physiological psychologists had already done to take apart the notion of a self-contained and stable individual. James, like Eliot, could reconcile this heterogeneity of a biological human with the experience of being a person. But *Daniel Deronda* is far from an exact preview of Jamesian psychology. Eliot’s experiment in novel form shows us that no individual becomes a person by herself. Although James would acknowledge the importance of the “social selves” a person develops as part of the empirical me, his focus would be on a theory of *the* person, of the individual consciousness of self. Eliot’s novel, on the contrary, demonstrates how the process of becoming a person who is embedded in the world, always changing, and yet still able to know oneself as a person, is something that can be achieved only in relation to another, significantly different person. Injecting sociality and ethics into psychology, her novel – in a very different way to Dickens’s multi-plot novels – creates the psychology of a person interactively. Where Dickens reconciled ethics with psychology by basing a

social psychology on the attractions and reactions between partial people and things, Eliot reconciled ethics with psychology by basing her social psychology on the ways in which a person's subjective consciousness incorporates, projects, and assimilates (sometimes imagined) elements of another consciousness. This is why Eliot's novel takes the form it does – the form of two novels in one with two protagonists. This is also, we might say, why the novel is titled *Daniel Deronda* and not *Gwendolen Harleth*. For Daniel is at the center of both plots in different capacities. In his own "Jewish plot" he develops into a person by taking hold of Jewish self-consciousness and discovered kinship and using these to localize his own identity. In Gwendolen's plot he is a construction of her thoughts, a socio-psychological mechanism by which she develops her own self-consciousness.

Eliot's novelistic experiment formally reconciles the oppositions generated by earlier Victorian novels between narrating and living, detection and sensation, knowledge and feeling. Charlotte Brontë had entered into and reconceptualized in novel form the debates that marked the early developments of physiological psychology. She emphasized a split between the observing, narrating self and the living, narrated self. The sensation novel made this split into the division between two narrative forms, detection and sensation. But Eliot, returning us to the experience of being a particular conscious self, uses the novel to reclaim those elements of detached, observational epistemology that had become associated with science, detection, and authority, with externalized procedures for making the person an object of knowledge in opposition to the lived phenomenology of a sensory self. She reclaims these elements by reincorporating them within the knowing and experiencing person as the facets of a self-consciousness always in the process of forming and reforming itself.

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Biography

Anna Marie Gibson was born on December 20, 1982, in Warrington, England. She spent her childhood in the village of Abbots Ann in Hampshire, England, with her parents Sandra and Peter Gibson, and her younger brother, Dave Gibson. She also has two older brothers, Chris and Phil Gibson. Anna moved to the United States in 2001 and earned her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Southern Mississippi (*summa cum laude*) in 2004. She then attended the University of Exeter in England to earn a Master's in English (2006) with distinction and commendation. After working briefly in the travel editorial department at *Southern Living Magazine* in Birmingham, Alabama, Anna began graduate school at Duke University in 2007.

While at Duke, Anna was supported by a number of fellowships and grants, including the Andrew W. Mellon/ American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Dissertation Completion Fellowship, the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Fellowship for Undergraduate Instruction, two William Preston Few Summer Fellowships, a Graduate School Summer Research Fellowship, and a Graduate School Travel Research Award. She was a fellow in the Preparing Future Faculty Program, a scholar in the Ph.D. Lab in Digital Knowledge, and she earned a Certificate in College Teaching from the Graduate School. Anna has presented research at the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies Conference (INCS), the American Comparative Literature Association Conference (ACLA), the International Conference on Narrative, and the North American Victorian Studies Conference (NAVSA). She received the Graduate Paper Prize for her paper, "Sensation, Science, and (Un)Predictable People," at the 2013 NAVSA Conference. She has taught classes in the department of English at Duke and received the Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2013. Anna lives in Durham with her partner, Jim Knowles.